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WAGNER AND HIS WORKS

VOL. II

Richard Wagner

WAGNER AND HIS WORKS

THE STORY OF HIS LIFE

WITH CRITICAL COMMENTS

BY

HENRY T. FINCK

VOLUME II

FIFTH EDITION

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LAST YEARS OF EXILE

AFTER LONDON

Punch, after all, was right in referring to the "music of the future" as "promissory notes." These notes were not to be redeemable in gold till many years later, and Wagner, realizing this, left London precipitately the very next morning after his last concert. From Paris he wrote to Praeger, expressing his delight on having got back to the Continent, and his hope of being able soon to resume composition, "the only enjoyment in life still left to me." He had not forgotten his wife, but succeeded in smuggling some fine laces for her through the Paris custom-house. A week later he writes from Zürich, chiding Praeger in his playful way for not giving him the important London news; to wit: —

"You might at least have written to say you were glad to have got rid of me, how sister Léonie fares, and how Henry is, whether Gypsy [Praeger's dog] has made his appearance in society, whether the cat has still its bad cough. Heaven! how many things there are of which I ought to be informed in order to be at ease! As for me, I am still idle. My wife has made me a new dressing-gown, and what is more, wonderfully fine silk trousers for home wear, so that all the work I do is to loll about in this costume, first on one sofa and then on another."

His wife was delighted to see, on unpacking his trunk, how well "sister Léonie" (Praeger's wife) had taken care

of his wardrobe; and to her not long afterwards Wagner wrote a long letter in French which those who have curiosity regarding his proficiency in that language may read in Praeger's book (277–280).

He also remembered his other intimate London friends, Sainton and Lüders, with greetings and letters. Twenty years later, when the preparations for the first Bayreuth Festival were in progress, Concert-master Sainton wrote to him in order to find out if he still held him in remembrance. In his reply Wagner gives us a glimpse of the warm gratitude he always felt towards true friends, and also adds a most important bit of information. Here is a translation of the letter: —

"You had no need of recalling to my mind the remembrance of you. I have dictated to my wife my whole life; she wished to know everything about it. This is all written, and will be left to my son, to be published after my death. And you? You figure to yourself that you will not figure in this biography? The devil! No. 8 Hind Street. And Lüders? The whole history of you two is deposed in this manuscript, from Helsingfors to Toulouse (passing Hamburg). And London? Charlemagne? Where are your wits, my dear fellow?"[1]

COMPLETION OF THE WALKÜRE

On his return to Switzerland he made preparations to complete the composition of the second drama of the Nibelung Tetralogy. It has already been stated that he began the musical execution of this drama in the summer of 1854 (June). He went at it with the characteristic

[1] From this letter (the French original of which is printed in Hueffer's *Half a Century of Music in England*) we may hope for some more interesting details regarding the London episode when the Autobiography is published.

buoyancy and enthusiasm that made him look on all his previous achievements as comparatively insignificant. "Now for the composition of *Die Walküre*, which deliciously pervades all my limbs," he writes to Liszt; and again, on July 3d: "The *Walküre* is begun: this is the *real* beginning, after all!" (Jetzt geht es doch erst los). In about half a year he had completed the sketch of this gigantic score, and in January, 1855, he was already hard at work on the instrumentation of the first act. When he packed his trunk for London, he enclosed his sketches, hoping to complete the scoring of the whole drama in England; but in this he was disappointed; the London climate did not agree with him, and failed to furnish the necessary stimulus to his creative power, while the worries over his conductorship, and the failure of his operatic hopes, consumed whatever nervous energy and desire to work was left in him. In April he laments that London has put him dreadfully back in his work; that he has only just finished the first act.

"Everything seems to cling like lead to my mind and body: I have already renounced my dearest hope for this year, — that of being able to commence my *Young Siegfried* immediately on returning to the Seelisberg; for I shall hardly get beyond the second act [of the *Walküre*] in this city. Constituted as I am, I need a very soft, sympathetic element if I am to work joyfully; this constant necessity for drawing myself together in self-defence only inspires me with defiance and disgust, not with love for expansion, for production."

The London climate even made him lose what little voice for singing he had, which he regretted because it deprived him of the pleasure of going over the first act of the *Walküre* with Klindworth, who had already

arranged that act for pianoforte, and "played it splendidly." It was Klindworth who arranged the whole of the *Nibelung's Ring* for the pianoforte, an instrument which he, as a special student of Chopin, understood thoroughly. It may be added here, in parenthesis, that Wagner was generally lucky in regard to the pianoforte arrangements of his operas, Uhlig having done *Lohengrin*, Klindworth the *Nibelung's Ring*, Hans von Bülow *Tristan*, and Tausig the *Meistersinger*. Josef Rubinstein's *Parsifal* is somewhat less satisfactory than these; but his *Tannhäuser*, based on the later Paris version, is of course preferable to the older edition.

On his return to Zürich Wagner was delighted with the change of air, and once more felt inspired to take up *Die Walküre*, which he had in the latter part of his London sojourn abandoned entirely. But he did not remain long in Zürich, for the neighboring Seelisberg tempted him with its ozone and its extensive Alpine panorama. On this mountain, to which he constantly refers in his letters as his ideal place for work ("the most delightful discovery I have made in Switzerland," he writes; "up there it is so beautiful, so ravishing, that I am full of desire to return — there to die"), he had hoped to begin his beloved *Siegfried* this summer; but now the *Walküre* was to receive the benefit of its stimulating atmosphere. His habitual ill-luck, however, followed him even to this mountain top. The demon of sickness came to lodge in his house. "My wife, particularly, causes me great anxiety," he writes to Praeger. "Her ever-increasing ill-health helps to render me very sad. Worried and troubled, I resume work. I struggle at it, as work is the only power that brings to me oblivion and makes me

free." Soon he too was prostrated by illness and confined to his bed for several weeks. On Nov. 3 he was still on the Seelisberg, whence he wrote to Praeger that he dragged himself through life as a burden, his only delight being work; his greatest sorrow the loss of *desire to work;* his greatest misfortune the terrible mutilations to which his works were subjected and which would increase should he die in exile. "This touches me to the heart, to the very core. It is when under such feelings that I occasionally lose completely — yes, even for a long time — the desire to work. These periods are terrible, for then nothing remains, nothing to comfort me." During the last few months, he adds, he had regained a little of his old enthusiasm, when his illness again thwarted his plans. A passage in an undated[1] letter to Liszt (No. 196) paints his mood in still more sombre colors: —

"My utter despondency is indescribable; sometimes I stare at my paper for days together, without remembrance or thought, or liking for my work. Where should I get the inspiration for it? . . . When I began, and quickly finished, the *Rheingold*, I was still feasting on the reminiscence of the intercourse with you and yours [Liszt had paid him a visit, which will be presently dwelt on]. For the last two years all around me has grown silent, and my occasional contact with the outer world is inharmonious and dispiriting. Believe me, this cannot go on much longer. If my external fate does not soon take a different turn, if I find no possibility of seeing you more frequently, and of hearing and producing some of my works now and then, my fountain will dry up and the end be near. It is impossible for me to go on as now. . . . The *Walküre* I have now with difficulty completed to the middle, includ-

[1] Wagner was very remiss in regard to dating his letters, especially in times of great excitement or despondency, as during the London period.

ing a clear copy. Now I have been kept from work for eight days by illness: if this thing continues, I shall soon despair of ever elaborating my sketches and completing the score."

Nothing, surely, is more astounding in the history of the human mind than the artistic heroism shown by Wagner in undertaking and continuing his gigantic Tetralogy, when he sincerely believed that he would not survive its performance. Remember that at this date, fifteen years after his *Rienzi* had been produced in Dresden, no other country but Germany had heard any of his operas; that the amazingly protracted negotiations regarding the first performance of the ten-year-old *Tannhäuser* in Berlin were not yet at an end; that Vienna, Munich, and Stuttgart had up to that date not produced a single one of his operas; that if these comparatively easy and popular operas could not be properly done, and failed to support him, it was supreme folly to hope anything from such mammoth works as he was then engaged on, — bear these things in mind, and who can fail to pay his tribute of admiration to Wagner's artistic character, his moral courage, his devotion to an ideal? But the despairing words just quoted show that although he was capable of such a sacrifice, it often entailed a deep struggle and the keenest mental anguish.

We are now in a position to understand why the scoring of the *Walküre* progressed so slowly that the end of the drama was not reached till April, 1856. On Oct. 3, 1855, the composer sent the completed first two acts to Liszt, with most interesting critical comments, followed by this pathetic utterance: —

"But should you like nothing at all in this score, you will at least once more be pleased with my neat handwriting, and will

think the precaution of red lines ingenious. This representation on paper will probably be the only one which I shall ever achieve with this work; for which reason I linger over the copying with satisfaction."

In the tragedy of Wagner's life there is *one* source of consolation which never failed, and that source was the great, warm heart of Franz Liszt — the noblest heart that ever beat within an artist's breast. So eager was the poor exiled composer — who could neither produce his own scores nor even play them on the piano — to have a word of encouragement and sympathy from one who could thus hear them, that he would not wait to complete the new score, but sent what there was of it to Liszt. And how did Liszt respond to this appeal?

"Your *Walküre* has arrived — and gladly would I sing to you with a thousand voices your *Lohengrin* chorus, 'A wonder — a wonder!' Dearest Richard, you are truly a divine man! and my joy consists in following you and feeling with you. When we meet, more about your magnificent, marvellous work which . . . I am reading through 'in great inner excitement.'"

The Princess von Wittgenstein added her tribute: "I wept bitter tears over the scene between Siegmund and Sieglinde! — That is beautiful, like eternity, like earth and heaven." What a privilege was that which this woman enjoyed! To hear the greatest pianist the world had ever seen, play over, for her and himself alone, the scores of the greatest of all dramatic composers almost before the ink had had time to dry!

When the last act also had been completed (in April), it was at once sent to Liszt with this message: —

"I am extremely eager to know how the last act will affect you; for beside you I have no one to whom it would be worth while to

communicate this. It has turned out well — is probably the best I have so far written." And again he was right in his judgment. "A terrific storm — of elements and of hearts — which gradually calms down to Brünnhilde's magic sleep."

And again the longing to hear it — which could only be gratified by a visit from Liszt — finds utterance, — "Oh, that you must yet stay away from me so long a time! Can't you come and make me a sudden flying visit?"

THREE VISITS FROM LISZT

As Wagner could not visit his friend in Weimar without risking imprisonment for his political doings in 1849, the only way for the two to meet was for Liszt to come to Zürich. This he did thrice during these years of exile, and the two friends also met on neutral ground, such as Paris. On July 11, 1853, Wagner wrote that he had just had "a wild week's revel with Liszt." The second visit to Zürich was made in October, 1853, Liszt being on this occasion accompanied by Richard Pohl, who relates how Wagner read to them his newly completed Nibelung poems, while Liszt retaliated by playing Bach, and Beethoven's last sonatas. Frau Wille tells how cordially the friends embraced each other on Liszt's arrival, and adds an interesting anecdote. Her husband asked the great pianist if there was no possibility of securing permission for Wagner to return to Germany; to which Liszt replied that he knew of no stage that could adequately represent Wagner's works — that he needed a theatre, singers, orchestra, in short, everything, according to his own intentions. Whereupon Wille remarked, "That would probably cost a million?" And Liszt replied prophet-

ically, — in French, as was his custom when he was excited, — "*Il l'aura! Le million se trouvera!*"

These visits from Liszt were to Wagner what the presence of Freia is to the gods in *Rheingold*, — a source of health, cheerfulness, and rejuvenation. "After we had seen you carried away from us," he wrote to Liszt (July 15), —

"I did not speak another word to George; in silence I returned to my house, silence prevailed everywhere. Thus was our parting celebrated — you dear man: all brightness had gone from us! O, come again soon! stay with us very long! If you only knew what traces of divinity you have left behind! Everything has become nobler and gentler; magnanimity pervades all minds — and melancholy broods over everything."

Was there ever such a friendship as that between these two musicians? The active part, of necessity, was entirely on Liszt's side, for Wagner was not in position to do anything for his friend, whereas Liszt had the power and opportunity to do very much for him. Nor was he ever chary in those words of encouragement which were even more as balm to Wagner's wounded soul than his actions in behalf of his operas and domestic comfort. "You are already, and are becoming more and more, the focus of all noble aspirations, exalted sentiments, and honest efforts in art," he writes in 1853. "This is my sincere conviction, without pedantry or charlatanism, both of which are a horror to me." And this feeling was but strengthened as time rolled on. "My passion for your tone-and-word-poems is the only thing that prevents me from resigning my post as Kapellmeister." He even elaborated a project for a Goethe-stipend at Weimar, with annual prizes for important new art works: in doing which

he had in mind especially the forthcoming Nibelung dramas. Did Liszt ever become weary of his friend's incessant demands on his sympathy, time, and resources? Read his letters and be convinced of the contrary. He constantly urges him, in fact, to let him know what he can do for him. It is pathetic to see how, whenever he is unable to meet Wagner's wishes, he apologizes, regrets, and explains just why he cannot do so, offering his cordial sympathy as a possible substitute: "for truly I do not believe there are many men on this globe who have inspired so deep and constant a feeling of sympathy with any one as you have in me." This was in 1856; and in 1859 (Aug. 22) he writes that Wagner's bust always adorns his writing-desk — "of course without the company of other celebrities — no Mozart, no Beethoven, no Goethe, and whatever the names may be of those who are not admitted into this room, the heart of my house."

Never, on the other side, were favors received with more profuse gratitude than that which Wagner felt towards Liszt, and expressed in many of his letters: —

"You were the first and only one who made me feel the ecstasy of being completely understood." "Your friendship is the most important and significant event in my life." "Without the encouragement of your sympathy my poor musical capacities must soon lose their cunning." "I have a claim on you, as on my *creator; you are* the creator of what I now am: I live only through *you* — this is no exaggeration." "It would have been impossible to do as much for myself in Germany as you have done for me." And once more: "Where has there ever been an artist, a friend, who did for another what you have done for me!! Truly, if I should despair of the whole world, a glance at you raises me up again high, filled with faith and hope. I cannot conceive what would have become of me these four years without

you: and what have you made of me! It is really enchanting to observe your actions during this time from my point of view!! Here the conception and the word 'gratitude' cease to have a meaning!"

This outburst of pent-up gratitude is, as usual, followed by an appeal for a visit from his friend and benefactor.

Friendship like this is such a very rare phenomenon in modern life — where it seems to have been displaced by romantic love — that I may be pardoned for quoting two more short passages, the first by Wagner, the other by Liszt: —

"If I could only describe the love I feel for you! There is no pang, no ecstasy, which does not vibrate in this love! To-day I am tortured by jealousy, fear of what is foreign to me in your unique character; apprehension, care — even doubt — ensue, and then again it flames up in me like a forest fire, which only a shower of the most voluptuous tears can at last extinguish. You are a wonderful man, and wonderful is our love! Without loving ourselves as we do we could have only hated one another ferociously."

And Liszt, in his last will and testament, pays this final tribute to his friend: —

"His genius has been a beacon light to me; I followed it, and my friendship for Wagner always bore the character of a noble passion. At a certain period I had dreamed of a new art-period for Weimar, similar to that of Carl August, in which Wagner and I would have been the leaders, as formerly were Goethe and Schiller — but untoward circumstances ended this dream."[1]

After the completion of the *Walküre*, Wagner became more and more urgent in his invitations and entreaties for another visit from Liszt. Besides the craving for

[1] La Mara, *Classisches und Romantisches aus der Tonwelt*, 1892, p. 271.

personal intercourse, there was now a new motive in his burning desire to hear how his Nibelung scores — so far as completed — would sound, at least on the piano. He could not play his own scores on the piano: orchestral performances he could not pay for: and his political position did not permit him to go where it would have been possible to produce them. Hence the prophet had to come to the mountain: Liszt must come to Zürich and play the Nibelung scores. Nor was Liszt at all unwilling. But as he had agreed to compose his Graner Messe and conduct it in Hungary, he could not repeat his visit until October (1856). In the meantime he was enjoying the scores of *Rheingold* and *Walküre*, which, he wrote, had for him

"the fabulous attractive power of the magnetic mountain, which irresistibly holds fast ships and mariners. H. has been here a few days, and I could not withhold from him the pleasure of beholding your Walhalla; so he bangs and rattles the orchestra on the piano, while I howl, moan, and roar the vocal parts. This by way of prelude to *our* grand performance in your Zürich palace, to which I am looking forward with eager pleasure."

Not so eagerly as Wagner, however: this poor man, now in his forty-third year, had not yet found the means to provide himself with a good piano, and an indifferent one had had to do such service as was called for during the composition of *Rheingold* and *Walküre*. As Liszt's visit drew near, he realized that he could not place such an instrument before the world's greatest pianist. Something must be done to receive him more worthily. A first class Erard — and — of course — happy thought! Liszt himself must provide it! Not as a present, necessarily, although there would be no reasonable objections

to that; but Liszt might write to the widow Erard and beg her to send him a piano, to be paid for at yard-long intervals — say at the rate of $100 a year.

"Tell her that you visit me three times (!) every year and *must* therefore absolutely have something better than my crippled instrument. Tell her a hundred thousand fibs; make her believe it is a point of honor that an Erard should stand in my house. In short, do not reflect — but go to work with inspired impudence! *I must have an Erard!*"

Liszt was not the man to say nay to such a request: "Whether Madame Erard is willing to place one of her grands in the advantageous way you indicate, is a questionable question, concerning which I shall take occasion to consult her." Doubtless he did so; but whether the result was favorable, history sayeth not. Inasmuch as Madame Erard had, on a previous occasion (in London), placed a piano at Wagner's disposal, in answer to a request by Liszt, let us assume, to the widow's credit, that she did contribute her mite to making the meeting of these two great men, and the first trial of the first half of the Nibelung Tetralogy, worthy of the occasion.[1]

The moral which we may draw from his inability to play his own full scores on the piano, is that even a great orchestral composer should not despise that compendium of musical instruments. Wagner tells us, with a certain pride, in the first paragraph of his *Autobiographic Sketch*, that he never learned to play the piano. In his *Oper und Drama* (IV. 9, 10) he emphasizes his contempt for that instrument by calling it "toneless" and accusing it of

[1] Concerning his temporary London Erard, Wagner wrote after thanking Liszt: "I believe if I once owned an instrument like that, I would yet learn to play the piano."

"giving only a sketch of music." And in a footnote he adds: —

"To me it seems truly significant that the same pianoforte player who in our days has in every way reached the highest summit of virtuosity, — that this same wonderman, Liszt, should at present have turned with such mighty energy to the toneful orchestra, and, as it were, through this to the living human voice."

But there were occasions when a piano was not to be despised; and one of these was when Franz Liszt was coming down to Zürich to play the new scores of his music-starving friend. So anxious was he to hear the *Walküre* played by Liszt, that the visit of 1856 was repeatedly postponed.

"The anticipation of going over this score (*Walküre*) also with you, is the only advantage to myself I hope from it. I myself am totally unable to undertake it on the piano in such a way as to derive any pleasure from it. You alone can do that for me. I intend, therefore, not to have you meet me till I can go over the whole with you."

To get his own voice into proper condition for assisting Liszt, he even practised solfeggios. It has already been stated that Wagner could no more sing than he could play. Praeger relates that one evening, in London, he sang: —

"And what singing it was! It was, as I told him then, just like the barking of a big Newfoundland dog. He laughed heartily, but kept on nevertheless. He cared not. Yet though his 'singing' was but howling, he sang with his whole heart, and held you, as it were, spellbound."

On the occasion of his third visit to Zürich (October, 1856), Liszt was accompanied by the Princess von Witt-

genstein and her daughter, and it was at her quarters that Liszt, Wagner, and the wife of Kapellmeister Heim, who had an excellent voice, attempted a primitive interpretation of the *Walküre* in presence of an assemblage of distinguished guests invited by Liszt to the hotel Baur. The performance was warmly applauded, and the listeners would have been no doubt greatly surprised had any one foretold that twenty years would elapse before this drama would have its first adequate performance. Liszt remained several weeks, and a few epistolary fragments addressed to him during this festive period indicate that Wagner, who had to nurse his health, was occasionally compelled to desert his boon companions and advise them to follow his example and go to sleep. In November, an excursion was undertaken to St. Gallen, where Wagner conducted the *Eroica* symphony, and Liszt his own *Préludes* and *Orpheus*. Concerning the impression made by these two pieces, Wagner writes: "Our orchestras are usually good, and when Liszt himself, or his initiated pupils are conducting, success can never fail any more than it did when Liszt, *e.g.*, appeared before the honest citizens of St. Gallen, who so touchingly expressed their astonishment that compositions which had been described to them as being so bombastic and formless, were found to be so clear and so easily comprehended."

WAGNER'S OPINION OF LISZT'S MUSIC

The sentence just quoted contains an intimation of Wagner's opinion of Liszt as a composer — an opinion which has been as persistently misrepresented by Liszt's enemies as his attitude towards the masters of the classi-

cal school. "Liszt's enemies!" Does it not seem astounding that one should have to write down those two words? Liszt, the most generous, big-hearted, unselfish musician that ever lived; who helped every artist in distress; who taught every student without charge; who delighted tens of thousands with such interpretations of the masters of all schools as no one had ever heard; who, by his countless transcriptions for the piano, did more to make good orchestral works and songs popular than all Kapellmeisters and singers put together; Liszt, who had a kind word for everybody, who was generous even to the incompetent, who wittingly offended no one, and whose tact and amiability are evinced in all his sayings and doings, — Liszt had enemies? Aye, and bitter ones; enemies who, on account of his lofty artistic ideals, finally succeeded in driving him from Weimar; enemies in the press, enemies everywhere; critical enemies, perhaps more bitter and venomous even than Wagner's. This fact alone refutes the oft-made assertion that the opposition to Wagner's music was caused entirely by his "personal arrogance," his "polemic essays," and his "lack of diplomatic tact." If that were true, how could we explain the fact that Liszt, who had not a trace of arrogance or aggressiveness, who wrote no polemic essays, and whose diplomacy was proverbial, fared even worse than Wagner as regards criticisms and performances — so badly, indeed, that his symphonic poems are only just now beginning to make their way in German concert-halls?

The enemies of Liszt, not content with denying his compositions all merit, even attempted to mislead the public in regard to the opinion of his music held by

others, notably by Wagner. Dr. Hanslick, for instance, had the audacity to remark, in his review of the Wagner-Liszt Correspondence that, whereas Liszt always praises Wagner's compositions in a tone of deep conviction, "Wagner, on the contrary, confines himself to a few rather vague explosions of enthusiasm for his 'wonderful great friend' without making any special remarks regarding his separate works. . . . That he did not by any means esteem Liszt's works highly, his intimate friends knew very well." This assertion is enough to take away the breath of any one who has read Wagner's essay on *Liszt's Symphonic Poems*, and the numerous enthusiastic references to his separate works in the Correspondence, which, together, would make up about thirty pages of this volume.

In the essay on *Liszt's Symphonic Poems*,[1] Wagner points out Liszt's originality in a sphere where some of the very greatest composers were mere imitators; namely, in the creation of a new form for instrumental music,— the Symphonic Poem,— which he pronounces superior to the old symphonic form. We know that in his earlier theoretical works, Wagner had expressed his belief that absolute (purely instrumental) music had reached its highest development in Beethoven, and that there was nothing to be expected beyond. But in this essay he frankly admits his error: Liszt has convinced him that a new development was possible, and not only a new development but an extremely important one: while the Symphony is evolved from *dance* and *march* rhythms, the Symphonic

[1] One of the most suggestive and valuable treatises in all musical literature; a paper which every critic, professor, amateur, and professional should learn by heart. It is printed in Vol. V. 235-257.

Poem has a *poetic* motive; its form is conditioned by the development of a poetic idea, and not by a change or alteration of slow or lively dance rhythms: "Now, I ask, is the march or dance, with all the thoughts accompanying this act, a more worthy source of Form than, *e.g.*, the idea of the principal and most characteristic features in the actions and sufferings of an Orpheus, a Prometheus, etc.?"

Nor did Liszt exhaust his originality by thus creating a new orchestral form which, in its organic unity, is as superior to the old symbolic form with its unconnected movements, as Wagner's music-drama is to the old mosaic of unconnected operatic tunes. He had also the gift of filling these forms with interesting ideas. Wagner testifies to "the extraordinary wealth of musical productive power manifested by the great tone-poems which were placed before us as by magic"; and he points out the "great and eloquent definiteness" with which the subject, or idea, is presented in these symphonic poems, in a musical transformation. "This inspired definiteness of musical conception is expressed by Liszt at the very beginning of his compositions in so pregnant a way that I often had to exclaim after the first sixteen bars, 'Enough; I have it all.'" He also appeals to the lady to whom this essay was addressed as a public letter: —

> "You were witness of the extraordinary exaltation of feeling induced in me by Liszt when he played his new works for me. You saw me when I was overwhelmed with emotion and joy that at last such things could have been created and communicated to me."

Imagine Wagner's astonishment when his pupil, Karl Ritter, informed him one day that Liszt's enemies were

assuring the reading public that in this essay he "really expressed himself evasively, and took pains to say nothing definite about Liszt!" Ritter was led by this report to read the essay. The result was that "he was delighted," as Wagner wrote to Liszt (No. 290),

"to note the enormous importance I assigned to you therein. Immediately I too — full of astonishment at the possibility of a misunderstanding — read the letter over again, and could not but join thereupon in Karl's cordial denunciation of the incredible obtuseness, superficiality, and triviality of the persons who found it possible to misunderstand the import of this letter."

As for Liszt, he wrote in his next letter: "I told you at the time how cordially I was delighted with your letter to M. on my symphonic poems; — let us take no notice of the gossip about it started by imbecility, triviality, and malice."

Does it not seem extraordinary that in face of all this, a professor of Musical History at the University of Vienna should have had the audacity to write the words we have above quoted? We stand here before another riddle, and not a pleasant one. But the riddle deepens when we read the references to Liszt's compositions scattered through the Correspondence. On March 5, 1855, he tells Liszt frankly what he likes and what he does not like in his *Künstler*, and explains the difference between his own method and Liszt's. He offers to produce some of his works in London (to which Liszt refuses his consent), and on April 5, 1855, he writes: —

"Klindworth has just played for me your grand sonata! We spent the day together: he dined with me and afterwards he played. Dearest Franz! Now you have been with me! The sonata is beautiful beyond all conception; grand, lovely, deep, and

noble — sublime like yourself. I am most deeply moved by it, and my London wretchedness is all at once forgotten. More I shall not tell you now, immediately after hearing it; but of what I have heard, my heart is as full as heart can be."

Liszt was greatly pleased with this letter, and on May 16, 1855, Wagner wrote again: —

"If there is anything to come to which I look forward with real anticipation as true enjoyment, it is the becoming acquainted with your new compositions. Don't forget to send me all of them!"

One of the most important of these letters on Liszt's compositions is dated July 12, 1856. It is a splendid essay in æsthetic analysis, but I can only quote the conclusion reached: —

"Thus I look on your orchestral works as a *monumentalization* of your personal art, and herein they are so incomparable that the critics will need a long time to find out what to do with them."

A postscript to the same letter adds: "But how terribly beautiful your *Mazeppa* is: I was quite out of breath after reading it through the first time! I feel sorry, too, for the poor horse: how cruel are nature and the world!" A week later (July 20) he writes again: —

"With your symphonic poems I am now quite familiar. They are the only music I have anything to do with at present, as I cannot think of doing any work of my own while undergoing medical treatment. Every day I read one or the other of your scores, just as I would read a poem, easily and without hindrance. Then I feel every time as if I had dived into a crystalline depth, there to be all alone by myself, having left all the world behind, to live for an hour my own proper life. Refreshed and invigorated, I then come to the surface again, full of longing for your personal presence. Yes, my friend, *you have the power! You have the power!*"

"I feel thoroughly contemptible as a musician, whereas you, as I have now convinced myself, are the greatest musician of all times" (Dec. 6, 1856). Passages like this, where Wagner, in a fit of despair, depreciates his own powers, are not infrequent in his letters. See especially the extraordinary outburst of self-destructive lava in a letter dated May 8, 1859, in which he confesses that he is convinced from the bottom of his heart that he is "an absolute bungler,"[1] while Liszt is an artist "from whose every pore music pours in wells and streams and waterfalls." He found that he remembered every detail of the *Dante*, but takes that less as a compliment to his own memory and receptive powers than as evidence of the "peculiar grandeur" of that symphony.

Among the letters from Wagner's pen that have been lost, or remain unpublished, up to date, none arouse one's curiosity more than those which he wrote to his former revolutionary colleague, August Roeckel, who was aging prematurely in the Waldheim prison. Wagner always did what he could to alleviate his loneliness by sending him the scores of his operas as they came from the press, knowing that the ex-conductor would prize them above all treasures. From the Waldheim prison also comes indirect testimony as to the high value Wagner placed on Liszt's music: he wrote so much about it to Roeckel that the imprisoned conductor became eager to see some of it, and begged Wagner to send him some of Liszt's scores (Correspondence, No. 245). No one who knows Wagner's undiplomatic and stubborn sincerity would

[1] This seems to have escaped Mr. Joseph Bennett's attention. Why try to prove laboriously that a man is a bungler or a charlatan, when he admits it himself?

ever believe that his praise of Liszt in letters to Liszt was the result of gratitude and sycophancy. But if any doubts existed on this subject, they would be annihilated by this indirect evidence. There was no earthly reason why he should praise Liszt's music to the imprisoned Roeckel, if he did not admire it sincerely.

Imitation, the sincerest form of flattery, must also be added to Wagner's tributes to Liszt's creative genius. August Göllerich, in his biography of Liszt, relates this anecdote: —

"It was at a rehearsal of the *Walküre* in 1876, which Liszt attended, when suddenly, as Sieglinde utters her dream-words, 'Did father then return,' Richard Wagner seized Liszt's arm, exclaiming: 'Papa, here comes a theme which I got from you.' 'Very well,' replied Liszt, 'then it will at least have a chance of getting a hearing!' The theme in question is the beginning of the *Faust* symphony, at the first hearing of which (*Tonkünstlerversammlung* at Weimar, Aug. 5–8, 1861) Wagner exclaimed rapturously: 'Many beautiful and delightful things there are in music, but this music is divinely beautiful!'"

On May 22, 1883, Liszt completed at Weimar a composition for string quartet and harp (*ad libitum*) or organ or piano. The manuscript is prefaced by these words: —

"At Richard Wagner's Grave.

"Richard Wagner once reminded me of the resemblance between his *Parsifal* motives and an earlier composition of mine, *Excelsior* (Introduction, *The Bells of the Strasburg Cathedral*).

"May these reminiscences be fixed herewith. He achieved the grand and noble in the art of our time.

"F. Liszt." [1]

[1] That Wagner's admiration for Liszt's compositions was not diminished by the lapse of years, is shown by the vigorous pages he wrote in his defence in one of his last essays (X. 135–137), in which he speaks of

HOW WAGNER COMPOSED

After Liszt had departed from Zürich, leaving many pleasant memories of his third visit, Wagner returned to his work on the *Nibelung's Ring*. The first two dramas were entirely completed; the third, *Siegfried*, was now to receive its musical setting. Not that the musical work remained to be done *ab initio:* the poem was entirely completed, and that meant, with Wagner, that the principal musical themes, and many of the details, were already worked out in his brain. This was his method of working from the earliest period, as we see from a most interesting document in the shape of a letter to a Berlin friend, the poet and bookseller, Carl Gaillard, bearing the date of Jan. 30, 1844, and written, therefore, during the time when the writer was at work on *Tannhäuser*. This letter was published by W. Tappert in an article on Wagner in Berlin (*Bayreuther Festblätter*), and in a footnote, Professor Tappert says that "thirty-three years later — in September, 1877 — Wagner, in course of a long conversation, described to me in detail his method of composing, almost exactly as in this first letter to Gaillard." As this document has, to my knowledge, never appeared in an English version, I translate herewith the pertinent part of it. After stating that he did not pride himself much on his poetic work (a point on which he changed his mind in later years — and with

the *Dante* Symphony, after repeated hearing, as this "equally inspired and masterful creation in our art world," and of "Liszt's genius, exalted above time and space," as having given birth to an immortal work, "even though that immortality be not recognized at present in Leipzig and Berlin."

very good reason), but that he had been driven to the necessity of writing his own text-books by the inability of securing good ones in any other way, he continues: —

"But at present it would be quite impossible for me to compose an opera-book written by another, and for this reason: It is not my way to choose a certain subject, elaborate it into verse, and then excogitate music suitable to go with it. Such a method would indeed subject me to the disadvantage of having to be inspired twice by the same subject, which is impossible. My method is different from that: In the first place, no subjects attract me except such as present a musical as well as poetic import to me at the same time. Then, before I begin to make a verse, or even to project a scene, I am already intoxicated by the musical fragrance of my task. I have all the tones, all the characteristic motives, in my head, so that when the verses are completed and the scenes arranged, the opera is practically finished so far as I am concerned, and the detailed execution of the work is little more than a quiet after-labor, which has been preceded by the real moments of creation. For this purpose, it is true, I must select such subjects only as are capable of no other but a musical treatment: never would I choose a subject which might as well have been used by a playwright for a spoken drama. But as a musician I can choose subjects, invent situations and contrasts, which must ever remain outside of the playwright's domain."

Numerous passages in Wagner's correspondence bear witness to the fact that this was always his method of composing. After he had found his subject he made a prose sketch of the plot, which was then put into verse, followed by a *Reinschrift*, or clean copy, with such corrections and improvements as suggested themselves during revision (compare *Siegfried's Tod* with *Götterdämmerung*, by way of illustration). A sentence like this (to Liszt, May 22, 1851), "I am only waiting for a pleasant sunny day to begin my *Siegfried* poem with the

pen, as it is already completed in my head," indicates that the verses also were in great part finished before he put them on paper, — a task seemingly difficult, yet obviously not impossible to one who could retain in his memory whole symphonic scores of Beethoven.

How did musical ideas come to Wagner? Commonly on his solitary walks when his dog was his only companion. Then his pregnant imagination would give birth to those beautiful motives which have since delighted so many thousands both by their musical loveliness and by their remarkable family resemblance to the poetic verses with which they were *twin-born*. Concerning the mental process of parturition Wagner gives this interesting revelation in one of his last essays (X. 225–226), where he evidently adopts the theory of the tenor Vogel (Schubert's friend), that musical creation is a sort of clairvoyance: —

"A dramatic composer of my 'direction' I should advise, above all things, never to adopt a text before he can see in it a plot, and this plot acted out by characters that for some reason or other deeply interest him as a musician. Then let him fix very carefully the one of these characters with which he may be directly concerned to-day: if it carries a mask, away with it! if it is arrayed in the dress of a costumer's model, away with it! Let him imagine the character in a dim light, where he can see only the glance of the eyes; if this speaks to him, the character will perhaps get into motion — which may even frighten him, but which he must endure; at last its lips move, the mouth is opened, and a voice from the spirit-world tells him something quite real, entirely intelligible, but also so unheard (as, for instance, the stone guest, perhaps also the page Cherubin, told it to Mozart) — that it awakens him from his dream. Everything has vanished; but in his mind's ear the sounds continue: he has had an 'idea,' a so-called musical 'motive'; Heaven knows whether others may have heard it just

the same or similar. Does this person or that like or dislike it? What does he care? It is *his* motive, given to him as his own in a perfectly legal way by that remarkable apparition, during the wonderful moment of his trance."

We might say that Wagner saw his music and heard his verses — simultaneously: they were, as I have just said, born as twins. Uhlig had apparently, like so many others, been unable to see how any one could ever set to music such a novel thing as the *Siegfried* poem; so Wagner writes (No. 30): "What you cannot even imagine, comes quite by itself! I assure you, the musical phrases fit themselves on to the verses and periods without any trouble on my part; everything grows as if wild from the ground." Speaking of the *Walküre*, he says: "The music will come very easily and rapidly; for it will be merely *execution* of what is already *completed.*" And a year later, concerning the whole *Nibelung's Ring:* "The prospect of setting all this to music has a great fascination for me: as regards form, this music is already entirely completed within me, and never before was I so decided and self-satisfied regarding the musical composition as I am now, in reference to this poem. I need only the necessary vital *stimulus* to give me the serene mood in which motives joyously and willingly well from my mind."

In writing his operas, did Wagner make use of a piano? We know that he always did have a piano in the house when he worked. In his *Autobiographic Sketch* (I. 23), he says, when he comes to speak of the *Flying Dutchman:* "To set my poem to music I needed a piano, for after nine months' interruption of all musical production, I had first to get into a musical atmosphere again"; and

similar passages occur in his letters. But this does not show that he composed "at the piano"; that is, he did not try to come upon musical ideas by improvising. His musical motives came to him, as we have just seen, on his solitary walks, during his "trances," and while at work on his poems. The very idea that those amazingly complex orchestral scores — which it is almost impossible to reduce to pianistic terms — could have been composed at the piano, is ridiculous: Wagner *could not even play them* on the piano, and had to get his friends — Liszt, Klindworth, Bülow, and Tausig — to do it for him. The whole atmosphere of his mind was orchestral, and, as we have seen, he had a certain contempt for the piano and its meagre resources of color and dynamics. Arrangements of his operas for piano solo (without words) he pronounced "ridiculous," and endurable only for the publisher's benefit. His feeling about this matter is indicated in this remark to Uhlig: "The very idea of a pianoforte score was so painful to me, that when it arrived, I felt hardly anything but distress and discontent; and it needed all the assurance of Baumgartner and Müller, that the arrangement was an excellent one, to make me fair in this matter towards you and your careful work."

What use, then, did he make of the piano in composing? The correct answer to this question is given in the following remarks by Praeger, who, during a visit to Zürich in 1856, had an opportunity to see the composer at work on *Siegfried*: "He did not seek his ideas at the piano. He went to the piano with his idea already composed, and made the piano his sketch-book, wherein he worked and reworked his subject, steadily modelling and

remodelling his matter until it assumed the shape he had in his mind." In other words, while Schubert wrote as a fountain produces water, and Beethoven put the results of his persistent reflections on his themes on slips of paper, Wagner used the piano as a sculptor does his clay, to mould his themes into various plastic motives. But that was all: the delicate lace-work of the orchestral score was all pure mental work which no physical manipulation at the piano could assist. And it is in this finishing work that the most peculiar aspect of his genius is revealed. Wise critics have asserted that Wagner's operas are inferior as works of art to some other operas, because they lose so much of their beauty when arranged for the pianoforte. We ignorant folks, however, will continue to believe that herein lies one of their most striking points of superiority. For what is the use of employing two hundred players, soloists, and chorus singers for an opera, when you can get all its musical marrow on the piano? You might as well chide Titian because he made pictures which are so much less interesting in a print or a photograph. A great part of his genius lay in producing with colors effects which no print or photograph can possibly reproduce. Wagner *thought out* his operas in orchestral colors; his very *ideas* are often conceived in colors and instrumental combinations which the piano can no more reproduce than it could have suggested them to the composer. There are in music emotional and sensuous ideas, as well as intellectual "themes," and in an opera the former are fully as important as the latter. The magic helmet motive in the *Nibelung's Ring* would lose half its charm if presented in a different orchestral coloring or played on the piano:

but that is not a fault of the composer; it is a mark of his superlative genius.

After he had his musical motives satisfactorily arranged in his head, how did he proceed to put them on paper? First he made a sort of skeleton sketch, — as painters make preliminary sketches, — the ideas being roughly jotted down on a few lines of music paper; and from these the orchestral score was subsequently elaborated. In the details of this method, slight changes were made from time to time. Thus in a letter to Fischer, speaking of the composition of *Rheingold*, he makes a remark which shows how utterly absurd is the notion that Wagner composed at the piano: "At this time I was adopting a new method with the instrumentation, whereby I did not first make a completely developed preliminary sketch. I felt the want of an arrangement from which I could play to any one. I therefore asked my friend to go on with the pianoforte version, while I was still writing the score, and so I sent him the detailed sections as soon as they were finished." Concerning this new method of instrumentation, several more interesting hints are given in letters to Liszt. One of the most significant is the following: —

"I am now composing my *Rheingold* at once in score, with the instrumentation; I could not find a way of making a clear sketch of the Prelude (the depths of the Rhine); so I resorted to the full score at once. This is much slower work, however."

In another letter he says: —

"I am working with all my energies. Could you not send me a man who would be able to take my wild lead-pencil sketches and make a cleanly copied score of them? I am working this time on a plan quite different from my former one. But the copying is

killing me! It makes me lose time of which I might make more precious use; and besides, the constant writing fatigues me so much that it makes me ill and causes me to lose the mood for the real work of composing. Without such a clever assistant I am lost: with him I would have the *whole* [Tetralogy] completed in *two* years. For that length of time I would need the man: should there be a pause in my composition, he might put his time in by copying out the separate parts. See if you can find one! Here there is nobody. True, it sounds somewhat fabulous that I want to keep a secretary — I, who can hardly keep myself in bread and butter!"

He required, indeed, a thorough musician — such as he afterwards found in his secretaries, Hans Richter and Anton Seidl — to make up a score out of his jottings which he himself describes as wild sketches — "everything written with pencil illegibly on single sheets." A few weeks later, indeed, he concluded that he would have to do his own copying, and not merely for pecuniary reasons: "It is altogether too difficult to copy them in *my* way, especially as the sketches often really are dreadfully confused, so that only I can decipher them." So he continued his copying of *Rheingold* while he was composing the *Walküre*.

For the lovers of autographs this result has proved a blessing, for never were there such neat-looking orchestral scores as Wagner's, — no corrections or erasures, — all these having been made before the *Reinschrift*, — so that his scores are almost as legible in facsimile lithograph as in printed form. He was proud, too, of his elegant handwriting, and repeatedly refers to it, as in these lines to Liszt: —

"You need not get me a copyist; Mme. Wesendonck has made me a present of a gold pen — everlasting — which has made a calli-

graphic pedant of me again. These scores will be my most finished masterworks in calligraphy! One cannot escape one's fate! Meyerbeer, in former days, admired nothing in my scores more than the neat writing: this tribute of admiration has now become a curse to me; I *must* write neat scores as long as I live!"

Laymen can have no conception of the enormous amount of labor involved in the writing and rewriting of such scores as Wagner's. There must be at least a million notes in the full score of the *Walküre*, and each of these million notes has to be not only written and rewritten, but written in its proper place, with a view to its relations to a score of other notes; and the composer, in doing this manual work, must keep in view harmonic congruity, avoid incongruous or inappropriate combinations of color, transpose wood-wind parts, etc.! As Heinrich Dorn, himself a composer of operas, remarks, in commenting on the "colossal industry" which Wagner displayed in the time between *Lohengrin* and the completion of the *Nibelung's Ring:* "No one who has not himself written scores, can comprehend what it means to achieve such a task in comparatively so short a time; and one who does comprehend it, must be doubly astounded at this exhausting and colossal activity." And this activity becomes almost incredible when we reflect that Wagner, most of this time, was poor in health, poor in purse, suffering the anguish of Prometheus Bound, and never expecting to survive a performance of what he was engaged on, — leaving all its pleasures and profits to future generations. Such is the nature and function of supreme genius: a sacrifice of the individual for the benefit of the species; just as the mother bird feeds her insatiable young till she falls dead from exhaustion.

THE PLEASURE OF CREATING

What is it that urges a man of genius thus to consume himself in the ardor of composition, even when there is no hope of reward except through posthumous fame? To this question Schopenhauer has given the best answer: —

"Genius is its own reward: for a man's best qualities must necessarily benefit himself. 'He who is born *with* a talent, *for* a talent, finds in it his happiest existence,' says Goethe. If we look up to a great man of the past, we do not say: 'How happy he is to be still admired by all of us'; but: 'How happy he must have been in the direct enjoyment of a mind whose traces continue to delight mankind for centuries.' Not fame itself is of value, but that wherewith it is acquired; and in the begetting of immortal children lies the real enjoyment."

With this view Wagner entirely agrees. "Artistic creation is delightful activity, not work," he wrote (III. 31) years before he became acquainted with Schopenhauer's writings; and this sentence is the key to one of his most characteristic traits — his complete and almost frenzied absorption in his composition. "I have just completed a new score," he writes to the music-teacher F. Schmitt (June 3, 1854);[1] "if you only knew what working implies with me at present! It is a fanaticism which permits me to recognize or notice nothing else right or left." From the beginning, his subjects "tormented" him (his own word) till he had shaped them satisfactorily; and we have seen how the story of *Lohengrin* took such hold of his feelings that he wept when he realized that the knight must leave Elsa. His "fanati-

[1] Oesterlein's *Wagner Katalog*, III. 15.

cism" for his work became more absorbing the nearer he approached the end — after completing *Tannhäuser* he felt as if he had escaped "a deadly peril"; and "when I have finished such a work as the *Walküre*," he wrote to Uhlig, —

"I always feel as if I had sweated some fearful anxiety out of my body — an anxiety that constantly increases as the work is drawing to a close; a kind of fear lest I might spoil something. I write my signature, with the date underneath, in as much haste as if the devil was standing behind me, and wished to prevent me from finishing."

The source of this fanaticism for work is, of course, the delight of begetting immortal children. "More and more I am becoming convinced," he writes to Liszt, "that men of our type must really be always unwell except in the moments, hours, and days of creative excitement; but then, it must be admitted, we enjoy and revel more than all other men." In another letter he declares that his life is endurable only in work: "rest is death to me." And again: —

"If I had to get up some morning without being allowed to continue my music, I should be unhappy." "Work is the only pleasure remaining to me; for that reason I work too much." "Talking, letter-writing, business complications — these are my life-foes; undisturbed, peaceful creation and work are, on the contrary, my life's preservers." "So long as I work I can deceive myself, but as soon as I give myself up to recreation I can no longer deceive myself, and then my wretchedness is simply terrible."

With all his delight in creative activity, he understood the truth which Moore has expressed in this question: "When did ever a sublime thought spring up in the soul, that melancholy was not to be found, however latent, in

its neighborhood?" Melancholy was the one thing of which Wagner always had an abundance. "If you read the poetry of the *Walküre* again," he wrote to Praeger,—

"you will find such a superlative of sorrow, pain, and despair expressed therein, that you will understand me when I say the music excites me terribly. I could not again accomplish a similar work. When it is once finished, much will then appear quite different (looking at the work as an art-whole), and will afford enjoyment, whereas nothing but pure despair could have created it."

TWO ACTS OF SIEGFRIED

In order to give a continuous account of Liszt's several visits to Zürich, we were obliged to pass over a few interesting events preceding his third visit: we must therefore retrace our steps, and briefly mention some of the events of the year 1856. In January he again reverted to the project (of which he had spoken to Liszt when he was at work on *Rheingold*) of securing a copyist. He found that he could give employment to one for three years; but that would cost eight hundred francs a year; and such a sum he could not, of course, deduct from his scant income. Could Liszt help him? Liszt did send a thousand francs, but was unable to promise an annual stipend such as his friend needed. He himself was poor, his income small, his compositions unprofitable, and his efforts to interest princes and others financially in Wagner's behalf were not successful. In return for Liszt's generous contribution, Wagner promised to devote the sum to the expenses of copying the *Nibelung's Ring* and to place the copies afterwards at Liszt's disposal as his personal property.

In spring, the desire to return to Germany awoke in

him more ardently than ever. He resolved to write to the King of Saxony, confessing his revolutionary rashness, and promising humbly never again to have anything to do with politics. What he asked for was not permission to reside again in Germany, — for he knew that Switzerland was a more favorable place for composition, — but only the privilege of attending here and there a first performance of one of his operas, to see that they were not maltreated. To avoid any "demonstrations," he would be quite willing to remain only during the rehearsals, always leaving the city before the first performance. But all his plans came to nought, as usual. Even Liszt, who was continually hobnobbing with all the princes in Germany, could not do anything for him — and could not even make it possible for him to come to Weimar, or Karlsruhe, where the sovereigns were personally well-disposed, but did not wish to offend the Saxon king by harboring a fugitive from his courts.

In midsummer, as was his wont, when his means permitted, Wagner went higher up into the Alps. The $200 Liszt had sent proved too much of a temptation to be resisted. The Nibelung copies could wait: nobody seemed very eager to have them, anyway; besides, he had just recovered from the twelfth attack of erysipelas in one year, and his health was now the most important consideration. So he packed his bundle and went to Geneva. Not far from that city, half-way up Mont Salève, he discovered a pension which suited him perfectly. From the balcony "a divine view of the whole Mont Blanc chain," behind the house a garden, and in this a secluded, quiet garden-house, which he managed to secure for himself, no one being admitted but the servant and the successor

of Peps, the new dog, Fips. There was only one condition attaching to his occupancy of this cottage: every Sunday morning, from nine to twelve, he had to vacate it for the services which a Protestant clergyman from Geneva came to conduct. "For religion's sake," he playfully adds, he was willing to make this concession: perhaps some of his sins would be forgiven him for this sacrifice!

Here he studied Liszt's new compositions, finding them, like the mountain air, a tonic which braced him up for the beginning of the *Siegfried* music. Here also he found what was becoming more and more a necessity of his life — absolute seclusion and solitude. He did not care for the personal homage of the multitude: what he wanted the people to devote themselves to was his operas, not his person. The unbidden visitors who constantly molest men of fame were a horror to him: —

"What one of our class sacrifices in his intercourse with all sorts of persons, utter strangers, what annoyances and tortures attend it, no one else can have any conception of; these tortures are the greater because no other class of persons understands them, and because men who are our very antipodes believe that we are really like themselves, for they understand just as much in us as we have in common with them, and do not know how little, how very little, that is. I repeat, the tortures of intercourse now annoy me more than any others; I make the most subtle arrangements to secure isolation, compel myself to be alone, and take pains to attain my object."

The taste of a quiet, secluded life amidst beautiful surroundings, which he got in this garden-house on Mont Salève, revived in him the eager desire, which he had harbored for several years, of having such a place, which

he could call his own, and in which he would be secure from all noise,— especially "the accursed piano-banging" to which he was everywhere exposed, and which often made him so nervous that all thought of writing was banished from his mind.

"Why," he exclaims in a letter, "why should I, poor devil, burden and torture myself with such terrible tasks, if the present generation refuses to let me have even a workshop? I have told the Härtels that if they cannot help me to an isolated house on a hill, such as I need, I shall let the whole rubbish go."

To secure the means of buying a place such as he wanted, he had offered his Nibelung scores, as far as completed, to Härtel, who declared his willingness to do something extra in order to secure them. In course of the negotiations the composer appears to have lost his patience, and shown his temper, for Liszt urges him to write a "somewhat polite note" to Härtel, who seemed offended: it was wise to be diplomatic, for publishers who could invest the preliminary ten thousand thalers these scores would call for, were not numerous. Inasmuch as the musical "experts" denied the very possibility of a performance of these Nibelung dramas, Härtel can hardly be blamed for going slowly in this matter; nor, on the other hand, can we fail to sympathize with Wagner for lamenting the necessity of offering his scores at that stage to the only bidder, when, if he could have been able to wait, he might have realized so much more on them. *He*, at any rate, knew that these scores were like a real estate investment in a growing Western city, bound to bear interest a thousand-fold.

In the meantime Liszt had paid his third visit. After

his departure *Siegfried* was taken up in earnest. On Dec. 6, 1856, the composer writes: —

"In these days I am completing the first scene. Strange, that not till I begin to compose does the inner significance of my poem reveal itself to me: everywhere I discover secrets which had until then remained hidden even to myself."

But the score, for various reasons, grew slowly. On Jan. 17 he completed the sketch of the first act, and then for ten days all activity was suspended on account of a persistent headache: the usual "fanatic" interest in his task had once more caused him to work too hard; every morning he sat down, stared at his paper a while, and finally concluded that a novel by Scott was about as much of an effort as he was equal to. He compares his nervous system to a piano out of tune; money matters troubled him, as usual; he intended to complete the instrumentation of the first act at once; but the noises in his house — musical and unmusical — were so great that he had to give up all thought of composing.

In this emergency there appeared opportunely a friend whom he characterizes as one of his greatest benefactors. A wealthy merchant named Wesendonck, whose wife was a great admirer of Wagner, built a villa on an eminence overlooking the lake of Zürich which he furnished in the most luxurious manner. Near it was a cottage which he rented, for a small sum, to the composer, who took possession of it in the last week of April, 1857. His wife being ill, he had to attend to all the details of moving himself. Here, at last, he was in a position to continue his beloved *Siegfried*, amid the inspiring surroundings of good friends, fine scenery, bracing air, and domestic comfort, which he had always longed for: —

"My study has been arranged with the pedantry and elegant comfort known to you. My writing-table stands at the large window, with a splendid view of the lake and the Alps; rest and quiet surround me. A pretty and well-stocked garden offers little walks and resting-places to me, and will enable my wife to occupy herself pleasantly, and to keep herself free from troubling thoughts about me; in particular, a large kitchen garden claims her tenderest care. So you see what a very pretty place I have found for my retirement."

Siegfried, there is good reason to believe, was Wagner's favorite music-drama. He certainly enjoyed composing it immensely — more, perhaps, than any of the other dramas. As early as 1852 he spoke of the delightful time he expected to have in writing its music. Two years later he wrote: "For the sake of my life's most beautiful dream, the *Young Siegfried,* I feel that I must complete the Nibelung dramas; the *Walküre* has exhausted me so much that I must permit myself this recreation." It was for the composition of *Siegfried* that he had originally chosen the Seelisberg, which he described as the most delightful spot he had discovered in Switzerland. That plan came to naught, thanks to the London Philharmonic interruption; but at last fortune smiled on him — for a moment: he had an ideal workshop, and his favorite *Siegfried* was to get the benefit of the happy creative mood which this would ensure. There is more in this than the reader perhaps fancies. The second act of *Siegfried,* which was written here, contains (without even excepting the last act of the *Meistersinger*), the most genial, serene, cheerful music Wagner ever wrote, — music which appeals even to those who dislike his other dramas because of their concatenated discords and heart-rending anguish. Doubtless he would have

given us more such happy music had fate more frequently smiled on him as it did during the days he spent in Wesendonck's cottage, where, besides the advantages above enumerated, he enjoyed also the creative stimulus which a man of genius finds in the sympathetic appreciation of a refined, intelligent woman. Newspaper gossip pursued him even here, but it can be stated on the very best authority that this slanderous gossip was as mendacious as it was malicious.

Of course it would be absurd to attribute the fact that *Siegfried* is Wagner's most inspired and spontaneous music-drama entirely to the happy circumstances amid which it was written; those account for its sunny atmosphere, but the real source of musical inspiration was the poem, which is his masterpiece, in every respect — a production which neither Schiller, nor Goethe, nor even Shakespeare could have surpassed in structure, diction, spirit, and feeling. Hence it is that the first act, too, which was written amid less favorable surroundings, is pervaded by such a remarkable buoyancy and spontaneity of musical utterance. And Wagner knew, better than any one else, what he had accomplished. "So far," he writes soon after his arrival at Wesendonck's,—

"I have composed only the first act; but that is entirely finished, more beautiful and successful than anything that came before it. I was astonished myself at being able to do such a thing; for since our last meeting I have again seemed to myself a dreadful bungler. . . . But now all is clear to me, and when you come to hear the forging and smithy songs, you shall learn something new from me."

He adds that in order to accomplish such a task, he needs "absolute concentration; all diversion is death to me."

And now we come to one of the most important episodes in his life. Most of the second act of *Siegfried* was written in 1857; the rest of it, with the last act, was not completed till 1869 — twelve years later — after *Tristan* and *Die Meistersinger* had been composed and performed. What was the cause of this long interruption?

WHY TRISTAN INTERRUPTED SIEGFRIED

In the last days of June, 1857, Liszt received a letter containing this startling news: —

"I shall have no further trouble with the Härtels, as I have determined finally to give up my headstrong design of completing the Nibelungen. I have led my young Siegfried into a beautiful forest solitude, and there have left him under a linden tree, and taken leave of him with heartfelt tears. He will be better off there than elsewhere. If I were ever to resume the work, some one would have to make it very easy for me, or else I should have to be in a position to present it to the world as a *gift*, in the full sense of the word."

The causes which led to this abandonment of his gigantic undertaking were several. Eight years had elapsed since he had had an opportunity to enjoy the stimulus to activity that would have been given him by the chance to hear a good representation of one of his operas. At the same time the wretched performances of his early operas which were then being given in German cities deprived him of all desire to write any more operas to be thus maltreated. The disgust which he felt with this state of affairs was one of the motives which propped him up when he undertook the seemingly impracticable Nibelung project: its very impracticability tempted

him; for, while engaged on this task, he would feel free from all temptation to have in mind, and make concessions to, the theatres and artists of the period. Such a work as his Tetralogy could only be given under extraordinary circumstances, at a special festival, under his own supervision. This was the answer which he had in readiness for his friends, when they expressed surprise that a composer who had shown so much practical sense and insight as he, should engage in such a chimerical undertaking.

The very conception of such a plan was a heroic performance; the complete and uninterrupted execution of it would have been a miracle. A time came when even his courage weakened: —

"When I laid aside one completed score after another, not to look at it again, I seemed to myself occasionally like a somnambulist, who has no consciousness of his doings. Yes, if I then looked up from these scores into the bright daylight about me, this terrible day of our German opera, with its conductors, tenors, songstresses, and repertoire difficulties, I was obliged to laugh aloud, and think of the 'stuff and nonsense' to which I was devoting myself" (VI. 378).

Even thus, however, things might have gone on without interruption had not money matters interfered. He must have something to live on. In a moment of embarrassment he had even sold the performing right to *Tannhäuser* to the manager of a suburban theatre in Vienna — the Royal Opera having not yet deigned to bring out any of his works. His attempt to make satisfactory arrangements with the Härtels regarding the publication of the Nibelung scores came to naught (although he would have been satisfied with $750 for

each score; to-day $20,000 would not buy one of these scores), and it was on this money that he had relied chiefly for his income during the time when the last two of his four dramas were to be composed. Something, it is clear, had to be done. What that was to be, he did not quite know himself; when suddenly the scales were turned, as it seems, by an extraordinary message from South America. In May, 1857, he received from a representative of the Emperor of Brazil an offer to write an opera specially for the Italian company at Rio de Janeiro. The composer himself was to conduct the performances, and all the means and resources necessary for a brilliant success were to be placed at his disposal. Of the sincerity of this offer there can be no doubt, for we know that Dom Pedro always took an interest in Wagner and was one of the patrons and visitors at the first Bayreuth festival. Wagner was at first staggered by the Brazilian proposal, and he actually appears to have for a moment considered it feasible. But after reflecting on the impossibility of entrusting such operas as he was then writing to Italian singers, he laughed at his momentary acquiescence. Nevertheless, this affair seems to have brought to a crisis a plan which had been in his mind indistinctly for some time, and which was nothing less than the interruption of his *Nibelung's Ring* in order to write a single opera which might be produced at once at the ordinary theatres and help to fill his depleted purse.

This opera was *Tristan and Isolde*, the plan of which he had conceived several years before. First mention of it is made in an undated letter to Liszt (written in the last months of 1854) in these words: —

"As I have never in my life enjoyed the true felicity of love, I will erect to this most beautiful of my dreams [*Siegfried*] a monument in which, from beginning to end, this love shall have the fullest gratification; I have sketched in my head a *Tristan and Isolde*, the simplest of musical conceptions, but full-blooded; with the 'black flag' which waves at the end I shall then cover myself — to die."

This plan he now (June, 1857) determined to carry out. In a year the poem and music could be written, and then, as no German city was open to him, he would produce it at the Strassburg theatre with Niemann and an orchestra from Karlsruhe, or some other opera-house. Furthermore, he intended to have this opera translated into Italian, dedicate the score to the Emperor of Brazil, and allow his company to give the first performance of it at Rio de Janeiro, where, probably, *Tannhäuser* would precede it. The information concludes with these words: —

"This time I have had to do violence to my feelings; in the midst of the most favorable mood I have torn Siegfried from my heart and put him under lock and key like one buried alive. There I shall keep him, and no one shall get sight of him, since I have to lock him up even from myself. Well, perhaps the sleep will do him good; but as to the awakening, I can guarantee nothing. It cost me a hard, bitter fight before I got so far. Now let that also be!"

He closes the letter with an injunction, doubly underlined, to preserve absolute silence regarding the *Tristan* project.

Wagner was not the only one who wept because he had to give up *Siegfried*. Liszt also shed tears over the abandonment; yet he cordially approved of the *Tristan* subject: —

"Beyond a doubt you will make a glorious work of it — and will then return to your *Nibelungen* with fresh energies. To Strassburg we shall all go and form a *garde d'honneur* for you." One thing, however, staggered Liszt: "How, in the name of all the gods, are you going to make of it an opera for *Italian singers* (as B. tells me you are)? Well, since the incredible and impossible have become your element, perhaps you will achieve this too."

But, as we have seen, the absurdity of such an idea had become evident to Wagner himself as soon as the first flush of enthusiasm, during which everything was wont to seem possible to his sanguine nature, had passed away.

PARIS, TAUSIG, AND MINNA

"So much is clear to me: I must this time accomplish a miracle in order to make the world believe in me." With this sentiment Wagner set to work on *Tristan and Isolde*. On the last day of the year 1857 the first act was completed. Business matters now called him to Paris; steps had to be taken to preserve the copyrights of his operas for France. In a small room on the third story of the Hotel du Louvre (No. 364), facing the yard, he found a quiet retreat such as he needed. Among his visitors were Berlioz and Liszt's son-in-law, M. Ollivier. Spare moments he devoted to reading Calderon, for whom he conceived a tremendous admiration which overflows in a long letter to Liszt (No. 255). In the same letter he remarks: —

"Besides you and Calderon, a glance at the completed first act of *Tristan* which I have brought here, has in these days buoyed me up wonderfully. This will become a remarkable composition. I feel a violent impulse to communicate it to some one, and fear that it will lead me presently to play some of it to Berlioz, regard-

less whether my beautiful playing will arouse his consternation or disgust. Heavens, if I were only with you now!"

It was as well that he did not play *Tristan* to Berlioz on the piano; for that composer, as we shall hear presently, did not understand that music, even in its orchestral presentation.

To cover the expenses of this trip (one of the objects of which was also to try to arrange for a performance of *Rienzi* at the Théâtre Lyrique), Wagner had been obliged to borrow $200 of Liszt, who, in turn, borrowed of his son-in-law (poor Liszt! his symphonic poems were even less profitable than his friend's scores)! Wagner, however, promised to repay it as soon as he had received his first advance on the *Tristan* score. Necessity had compelled him to make a peculiar arrangement with his Leipzig publishers. Breitkopf and Härtel had refused to take the Nibelung scores at his terms because that work appeared so impracticable; *Tristan* seemed more of a possibility, so they not only accepted it, but made their arrangements even before it was composed, promising to pay one-half of the author's royalty (which was to be $800 in all) on receipt of the manuscript of the first act. The publishers hoped like the composer that *Tristan* would prove profitable by making its way at once to all the German opera-houses; they did not dream that seven years would elapse before its first performance. But what more could have been expected? Wagner was only forty-five years old, and *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* had been before the world only thirteen and eight years respectively! Did not Liszt write to him about this date: "The last time we performed *Lohengrin* I felt proud of my century, for possessing such a

man as you have shown yourself! With *Lohengrin* the old operatic world comes to an end; the spirit hovers over the waters and there is light!" Was not such a message better than money? Why should men of genius have money, anyway?

Room No. 364 at the Hotel du Louvre was a quiet, secluded place, but it had one disadvantage. The waiter was a rascal who stole what little money Wagner had left, and then decamped for Germany. Liszt, the remedy for all evils, was immediately informed of his destination, and the police put on his track; but whether this thief of doubly-borrowed money — the repayment of which was to cost one-quarter of the earnings from the composition of *Tristan and Isolde* — was caught and deservedly punished, is a point which must be left for some future investigator of the Jena police records to determine.

On his return to Zürich, another surprise awaited Wagner. Liszt sent him the "wonder-fellow" Karl Tausig, the "Liszt of the future," as he was called, and whom he commended to their common friends, the poet Herwegh, journalist Wille, architect Semper, physiologist Moleschott, etc. Letter 260 gives a most amusing account of the "terrible" young pianist, whose "frantic" playing made his host "shudder." To keep such a fellow in the house was impossible; he had to do his practising in a neighboring tavern, but spent all the rest of the time in the house of the composer, whose ardent apostle he was destined to become. He drank tea and smoked strong cigars incessantly; had no appetite at mealtime, because he was always eating cheese and *zwieback* between meals — those favorite

biscuits of which Minna, who happened to be away, had left a supply barely sufficient for her husband. Karl detested walking, and declared, after one hour, that they had been out four; in short, Wagner had, for the first time, a taste of a father's feelings in taking care of an unruly boy. Tausig was then aged seventeen.

Minna, all this time, was at a neighboring summer resort for the cure of her heart-trouble: "My anxiety for her was terrible: for two months I was really prepared to hear of her death any day. Her deplorable condition was brought about especially by the excessive use of opium — ostensibly as a cure for insomnia." She was now better, but her heart-trouble was incurable, and promised much future tribulation for her husband, who complains in a letter[1] of this period to Frau Julie Ritter (his benefactress) about his wife's nervousness, despondency, and violent temper, and that she was "making a hell" of the home to which he was so fond of confining himself: —

"Her condition of mind became such a torment to herself and her surroundings, that a radical change of the situation had to be made, unless we were all willing to wear ourselves out unreasonably. . . . The state of her education, and her intellectual capacities, make it impossible for her to find in me and my endowments, the consolation which she needed so much by way of compensation for the disagreeableness of our material situation. If this is the source of great anguish to me, it nevertheless makes me pity her with all my heart, and it is my most cordial wish that I may some day be able to afford her lasting consolation in her own way."

Praeger, in his reminiscences of his visit to Zürich in 1856, relates two incidents which show how ill-mated

[1] Langhans, *Geschichte der Musik*, II. 492.

Wagner and his first wife were. One morning when Praeger and Minna were waiting for her husband to come down from his work on the Tetralogy, she asked, "Now, honestly, is Richard such a great genius?" She had evidently not been able to make up her mind as to this, in the fourteen years that had elapsed since the production of *Rienzi!* On another occasion, when he was bitterly animadverting on his treatment by the public, she said, "Well, Richard, why don't you write something for the gallery?" "And yet," Praeger adds, "notwithstanding her inaptitude, Wagner was ever considerate, tender, and affectionate towards her." She had all the domestic virtues which are so highly prized in Germany, and she had, especially, the economic sense, which Wagner lacked, and which once made him exclaim to Liszt that hereafter he would place his financial affairs entirely in her hands. But such qualities could not atone for the lack of artistic sympathy which her husband craved, and which made him form a romantic friendship and seek the company of Mrs. Wesendonck more than was agreeable to Minna, whose jealousy was repeatedly aroused; to what a degree may be inferred from what he wrote to Praeger one day: "The devil is loose. I shall leave Zürich at once and come to you in Paris." But two days later he writes again: "Matters have been smoothed over, so that I am not compelled to leave here. I hope we shall be quite free from annoyance in a short time; but ach, the virulence, the cruel maliciousness of some of my enemies. . . ."

There appears to have been a temporary separation; for in 1859 Wagner writes to Frau Ritter in reference to the projected performance of *Tristan* at Karlsruhe: —

"This period I have also chosen for a reunion with my poor wife. May Heaven grant that I shall always feel able to carry out patiently my firm and cordial determination of treating her in the most considerate manner. I confess that my relation to this poor woman, who has had so many trials, and is now suffering so much, has always spurred me on to preserve and develop my moral powers. In all my relations to her I am guided only by the deepest pity with her condition, and I hope confidently that it will always arm me with the persistent patience with which I feel called upon not only to endure the consequences of her illness, but personally to allay them."

So peace was patched up for a few more years; but better far had it been if the two had never met. Wagner had made the same matrimonial mistake as Goethe, Heine, Racine, and many other men of genius; and a poor woman, kind by nature, who might have made a common mortal happy and been happy herself, had to suffer a quarter of a century for this mistake of wedding one with whom there could be no marriage of souls.

A VENETIAN LOVE-DUO

The second act of *Tristan* was superficially sketched at Zürich, in June, 1858; but the orchestral elaboration which, in the case of so richly colored and intensely emotional a work as this, is of equal importance, was made in a more romantic spot. The reader knows that Wagner shared that universal longing of the German heart for Italy, to which Goethe gave expression, before he had been there, in his famous song "Kennst du das Land wo die Citronen blühen?" But the greater part of Italy belonged to the German Alliance, and was therefore not open to the exiled composer. Venice, however,

being an Austrian possession at that time, was accessible provided the Austrian officials interposed no obstacle; and Venice was precisely the city he most longed to live in. Its attractions had been painted to him in the brightest colors by friends. Being half-way between Vienna and Germany, it was also a convenient station for transacting operatic business. But the principal reason for his choice was a hygienic one: Venice, being without horses, was always free from dust and noise. Schopenhauer, with his usual acumen, made the horror of noise a criterion of advancing civilization, and pointed out what tortures especially men of genius, with their sensitive nervous organization, are subjected to from the brutal indifference to noise displayed in our large cities — the rumbling of wagons, cracking of whips, crying of wares, jingling of bells, etc. No man of genius ever suffered more from such noises than Wagner, who, whenever he stayed, if only a few days, in a large city, always sought for a room in a quiet region, with a few green trees thrown in, if possible. Trees are scarce in Venice, but it is — outside of Japan — the least noisy city in the world, and this feature it was, as he tells us, that decided his choice.

Of course Liszt had to be consulted in the matter: his position was such that without his friend's advice and assistance he could hardly take a step outside of Switzerland, during the period of his exile. Liszt was asked to beg of the Grand Duke of Weimar, as a special favor, intercession with the Austrian government for permission on Wagner's part to live in Venice for some time. Liszt immediately investigated the matter, and came to the conclusion that Venice was not an abso-

lutely safe place for him, politically; so he advised Genoa or Sardinia instead. But Wagner, with characteristic fearlessness, had already gone to Venice, on his own responsibility, before his friend's answer came. Liszt fancied that he had gone to Italy in the hope of producing some of his works there; and knowing very well that there was little hope for serious works of art in that country, where the chief function of operatic composers was the writing of strings of showy arias for popular singers to display their vocal agility, he frankly informed him that he had as little to hope from Italy — or France — artistically, as from Austria politically; "for several years to come Germany is the only true soil for your works; to this soil," he adds prophetically, "they will assert their right more and more firmly, and more than all others."

But the composer of *Tristan* had no other "artistic intentions" in visiting Venice than the desire to finish that score amid agreeable and soothing surroundings. This desire was at first gratified: —

"You will be pleased to hear that Venice has not disappointed me in my expectations. The melancholy silence of the Grand Canal, on which my residence — a stately palace with large rooms — is situated, is sympathetic to me; entertainment and agreeable diversion of the imagination are provided by my daily walks on the St. Mark's Place, by gondola excursions to the Islands, promenades on the latter, etc. Later on the art treasures will have their turn. The absolute novelty of these interesting surroundings is a source of great pleasure to me. I am now waiting for my piano, and hope to be able next month to resume my work without disturbance. To complete *Tristan* is my object; I have no other."

It was amid such surroundings that the glorious love-duo which takes up so great a part of the second act of

Tristan was composed. Of all cities in the world Venice, with its voluptuous climate, famous works of art, and lovely women, was the best place to provide the inspiration and the sensuous Titianesque coloring for this amorous duo. The piano arrived in October, and was placed in a large, resonant hall, where composition was resumed in a happy mood: —

"My work is dearer to me than ever; I took it up again the other day; the music flows like a soft stream from my mind. . . . The second act, of which I had before made only a light sketch, was interrupted by visitors. I have now resumed it; it will be very beautiful, and will be completed and in print by the end of the year, at the latest. In March the last act will follow, and if all goes well, I shall attend the first performance by Easter."

Poor deluded man! Seven years of bitter, continuous disappointments were to elapse before that first performance. Troubles began to gather before long; the furies of fate persecuted this unhappy artist wherever he went. "Such work as this," he had written, "I can do only in the most favorable mood"; and this happy mood was not to last long. He was afflicted with a new phase of his cutaneous disease; for almost two weeks he could not leave his chair; a sore on his leg caused him such excruciating pain that, as he says, with grim humor, "during my occupation with the music I occasionally cry out aloud, which often produces a great effect." Like Job, too, he had to sit and hear the hopeless messages as they came in, one after another. From Munich came the news that the projected *Rienzi* had been given up, on account of "religious objections" which had been urged against it! Another little pile of ducats gone — a very serious matter to "such a poor devil as myself,

who has to look on every bit of income as on a lottery prize." Hannover also declined at the last moment because — listen! — Niemann, who subsequently became the greatest of all Wagnerian tenors, did not dare to undertake the title rôle after hearing Tichatschek in it! *Rienzi!* — and Wagner was then at work on *Tristan!!*

Worse things were to follow. Liszt himself was becoming helpless to aid his friend. Weimar, the first "Bayreuth," had capitulated to the enemy, since the advent of Dingelstedt. A "brutal mercantile spirit," as Liszt called it, took the place of the former artistic ideals; operas, including Wagner's, were given solely to make money; Liszt ceased conducting, and after the cabal directed against the *Barber of Bagdad* of Cornelius, he gave up his post as conductor entirely. He had been ignored in the arrangements for the production of *Rienzi;* Dingelstedt was not ashamed to haggle with Wagner for a few dollars more or less honorarium; the opera was abandoned, another "lottery prize" vanished into air, — and Wagner was reduced to such a pass that he had to pawn his only valuables, his watch, a golden snuff-box from the Grand Duke, and a *bonbonnière* from the Princess. ("May the world pardon me these luxuries," he exclaims.)

Surely there was reason why he should make one more attempt, through Liszt, to improve his position. He does not care so much for amnesty, or for a regular position at a German theatre; even occasional attendance at performances is not what he most craves; his mission is to compose, and how can he do his best at this when petty financial cares are taking up all his time and spoiling his mood for creating? What he needs,

and what he thinks he has a right to claim, is a regular pension, such as friendly German potentates might award him, in return for services to be rendered. He wants the enormous annual sum of "at least two or three thousand thalers" ($1500 to $2200) — no more than had been paid to other composers — even to Mendelssohn, who was wealthy and did not need it. In return for this he would pledge himself to compose continuously, and, after his return to Germany, personally superintend the production of his operas at the theatres of the Princes who contributed to the pension. The obligation would not be great, he adds. He was now forty-six years old, and looked forward to ten years more of activity.

Of course this plan, like all its predecessors, came to naught. Nay, so far from being amnestied and pensioned, he was deliberately harassed in Italy. The Saxon authorities *made an effort to secure his expulsion from Venice,* and it was only owing to a certificate from his physician that he was allowed to stay a little longer, on account of the state of his health.

Such experiences would embitter a saint, and Wagner was a Job only in experiences, not in temper. He suffered at this time from several paroxysms of fury and ill humor, in which, he says himself, "I must be very ugly. . . . I know that I allow myself too much freedom, and that I count more than is right on the patience of others." And as a man who has been annoyed by persons on whom he cannot discharge his pent-up wrath, sometimes uses the dearest friends and relatives as a lightning-rod; so Wagner, goaded by ill-health, and the cumulating pile of disappointments, wrote a letter to Liszt which might have brought about a rupture but for

the good nature of Liszt, who, however, "washed his friend's head" thoroughly in a reply which is not printed in the Correspondence. It was only a "family quarrel," a passing storm, leaving matters as they were before. And how they were before, may be seen from Liszt's utterance when he received advance sheets of the first act of *Tristan* from the publishers, and from Wagner's answer: —

"What a heavenly gift Härtel has sent me! All the children in the world, with Christmas trees adorned with golden fruits and lovely presents, cannot experience as much joy as I alone derived from your unique *Tristan*. Away with all cares and troubles of the humdrum world! Here once more is something to weep over and flare up in enthusiasm. What ravishing magic! What an incredible wealth of beauty in this flaming love potion! What must have been your feelings when you conceived and composed this wonderful work!"

Liszt, being a composer himself, knew that the pleasures of creating outweigh all the triumphs of popular success. That only one thing is comparable to these creative pleasures Wagner knew. Supersensitive though he was to criticism, he was far from sharing the feelings of Byron, who once wrote that the depreciation of the lowest of mankind was more painful to him than the applause of the highest was pleasing. On the contrary, the sympathy and encouragement of one man upheld him against a host of Philistines: "The blessing of your expression of sympathetic interest in *Tristan*, which I had long looked forward to with incredible eagerness, made me flare up in convulsive exultation," was his answer to Liszt; and it was this manifestation of sympathy that had led him to hope that others might

come to share it, and help him to secure the pension which would enable him to continue his creative work.

AT THE LAKE OF LUCERNE

Driven from Venice by the persecution of Saxon officials, he once more sought refuge in Switzerland, choosing this time the romantic Lake of Lucerne: —

"You know how I love the Vierwaldstätter See," he writes to his friend; "Rigi and Pilatus, etc., have become a hygienic necessity for my blood. There I shall be quite alone. At this season [March] it will be easy to find a most desirable residence, and there I expect to work splendidly. My Erard has already gone ahead."

Here the third act of *Tristan* was begun and completed, in about four months; there is extant a telegram from Liszt, dated Aug. 9, 1859, reading: "To the completed *Tristan* the heartiest congratulations of your faithful Franciscus." It need not be said that under the most cheering circumstances the writing of such a marvellously complicated act as the third of *Tristan*, bubbling over with genius, would have been a tremendous achievement; but the feat becomes more remarkable when we discover what a cheerless, desolate existence the composer led during this time: —

"Excepting the servants, I do not see a human being. Try to imagine what my feelings must be. — Children! children! I fear I shall be neglected too long, and the 'too late' will some day present itself to you too, with reference to me. I am told, 'finish *Tristan*, then we shall see'! But what if I did not finish *Tristan* because I could not do it? I feel as if I must break down in despair before the — goal? — is reached. At any rate, I daily look

at my book with the best will, but my head remains desolate, my heart empty, and I stare out into the mists and rain-clouds, which have been impenetrable here since my arrival [two months ago], and have prevented me even from purifying my dark blood by means of a few invigorating excursions. . . .

"With the last act of this child of pain, I am now standing on the edge of *to be or not to be* — a trifling pressure on some spring of the common chance to which I am now exposed so mercilessly, may kill this child before its birth."

For the second time he was tempted to give up composition, to go abroad and conduct concerts, the offer coming this time from the United States. Fortunately he said no; who knows what might have happened to him? and *Tristan* would have remained incomplete. The whole long and tragic letter (No. 290), from which I have just quoted a few lines, should be studied by every reader of this biography. No one but the composer of the heart-rending music of the third act of *Tristan* could have possibly written it. Liszt describes it admirably in his reply: —

"What a frightful storm — your letter, dearest Richard! With what might of despair it tosses about and demolishes everything! What remains to be heard amid this din and howling? . . . And yet my faith in you is firm. . . . Even your crazy injustice towards yourself, when you call yourself 'a miserable, bungling musician' (!!!) is a sign of your greatness. As Pascal remarks, 'True eloquence mocks at eloquence.'"

To which the pious Liszt adds, as was his wont, words of religious consolation, though he knew that his seeds would not fall on soil where they could grow. *Tristan*, however, was completed, and remains the most remarkable *opus* in the literature of music — a work so original,

so unique, that no other composer before or since could have written a page of it; a score so marvellously concatenated in all its parts that a page removed from it would mar the whole, as much as a pillar removed would mar a temple; and just as a single capital suffices to show the style of a temple, so every single bar of *Tristan* is unmistakably Tristanesque.

The score being completed and placed in the publisher's hands, the next thing was to find a place for its performance. The Strassburg project previously alluded to was given up on the advice of Dr. E. Devrient, Director of the Grandducal theatre at Karlsruhe, who recommended his own theatre instead. Nor was this unwise counsel, for Grand Duke Friedrich of Baden had married the Princess Louise of Prussia, who was an admirer of Wagner's music, as was the Duke himself, who promised to provide the means for a good performance. Moreover, at this time the Karlsruhe theatre rejoiced in the possession of those two gifted singers, Schnorr Von Carolsfeld and his wife, whom Wagner, six years later, chose among all German singers to impersonate the rôles of Tristan and Isolde at Munich. But the usual ill-luck pursued him here. To give *Tristan* without his personal supervision was out of the question, and although the Duke himself pleaded with the King of Saxony on his behalf, permission for his even temporary sojourn in Germany could not be secured. And when in the following year, a partial amnesty followed, which would have enabled Wagner to go to Karlsruhe, the two Schnorrs had left that city (gone to *Dresden* — the capital of Saxony, from which he was still excluded), while the singers who had taken their place were unable

to cope with such difficult rôles; so that the *Tristan* project had to be abandoned! Was ever a man doomed to so many disappointments?

The Grand Duke of Baden having failed in his kind efforts to secure an asylum for the exile, and Venice being closed against him, nothing was left but to remain in Switzerland, or go to Paris or London. His experiences at London had not been such as to invite further experiments, and Switzerland was beginning to pall on him, for the reason that he had no opportunity there to hear his own or any other music. Paris was therefore selected as a place where he could at any rate enjoy an occasional quartet or orchestral concert; Paris, too, offered at least the possibility of the performance of one of his operas. There was a chance for *Rienzi* at the Théâtre Lyrique; *Tannhäuser* was named by rumor in a vague connection with the Grand Opéra; and who knows but that a chance might offer even for *Tristan*? To Paris, therefore, he went, with the intention of remaining there an indefinite time — regardless of the disagreeable memories which this sojourn must arouse of his trials, disappointments, and starvation in the same place twenty years before. Twenty years! In the meantime he had finished *Rienzi*, composed the *Dutchman*, *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, *Rheingold*, *Walküre*, half of *Siegfried*, and the whole of *Tristan;* yet, as far as his fame and prospects in Paris were concerned, he might as well have spent these years as a missionary in South Africa. A few selections from his operas had been played at semi-private concerts; a number of malicious and a few favorable newspaper articles had appeared on his music; in 1858 he found here and there a

piano score of *Tannhäuser* in the house of a friend — but that was about all. France was slumbering in profound ignorance of the composer of the "music of the future"; but events were brewing which were soon to make him the best known man in Paris.

IN PARIS AGAIN

In a public letter addressed to the editor of a Vienna newspaper,[1] Wagner himself confessed that his chief motive for settling again in Paris, in the autumn of 1859, was the hope of being able to bring about a performance of *Tristan* under his personal guidance, which in Germany was at that time impossible. His original plan was to invite a number of the best German singers to Paris, in the summer of 1860, to give a series of model performances of *Tristan*, to which perhaps some of his earlier works might be added. This, however, was more easily planned than carried out. The desired singers, having their vacations at different times, could not all accept simultaneously, and, more important still, such an enterprise would require a large sum of money of which the projector himself could not advance a penny. There was, however, a wealthy man, a friend of one of his friends, who might perhaps be induced to take the risk, provided he could be sufficiently interested in the music. For this purpose, and in order to give the Parisians a taste of his music, Wagner made arrangements for a few concerts, at which excerpts from his operas were to be given. But before describing these concerts, a few preliminary events must be related.

[1] *Botschafter*, 1865; reprinted in *Bayreuther Blätter*, 1890.

An interesting and seemingly auspicious incident occurred at the custom-house when Wagner entered Paris. It is related by the dramatist Sardou in the preface to a collection of the poems of Edmond Roche. This young poet was at that time a customs officer at the railway station. One day he noticed that a stranger, just from Germany, was having difficulty in getting through the thousand formalities of the place. The stranger's name was *Wagner;* Roche assisted him with the greatest possible politeness, and when Wagner thanked him, he replied: "I am only too happy to have obliged a great artist." "You know me then?" exclaimed the artist, surprised and pleased. Roche smiled and hummed a few melodies from his operas. "Ah, it is a happy augury," exclaimed Wagner; "the first Parisian I meet knows my music and likes it. We shall meet again;" and with these words he took a few sheets of music from his satchel and dedicated them to Roche. They did meet again, for Roche became the translator of *Tannhäuser;* but the "happy augury" did not amount to much.

One of the first friends Wagner made in Paris at this time was A. de Gaspérini, a young physician and author, who subsequently published a Wagner biography of 173 pages[1] which contains many interesting details, especially of this Parisian period. Gaspérini relates that when he met the composer he would have judged him, from his appearance, to be thirty-six, and not forty-six. At first he was struck by his apparent coldness, reserve, and the immobility of his features. But as he warmed up in conversation, a complete transformation took place,

[1] Paris: Heugel, 1866.

and his visitor found in him the man such as he had imagined him from his works. When they touched a sympathetic subject, — the Parisian plans, — he looked no longer like an ascetic disciple of Buddha and Schopenhauer, but "a young man, full of life and faith, and in spite of his theories, far removed from Buddha and his sterile meditations."

The first few months Wagner lived on the Rue Matignon, but the place was too noisy for him, so he moved to the Rue Newton, near the Arc de Triomphe, where he could enjoy the sight of trees. His upholstery, the accumulation of years, he had brought from Zürich, and forthwith the gossips charged him with the ostentation of an Eastern potentate! "Look here," he said one day to Praeger, who had gone to Paris to call on him; "now you know this furniture, and how carefully Minna has preserved it, and yet see how I am treated." In the third volume of the anonymous *Memoiren einer Idealistin* (p. 258) we find this description of the new domicile: —

> "Wagner had rented a small house with a little garden, in a quiet street, not too far from the Champs-Élysées. It presented a charmingly cosy appearance; especially did the composer's workroom and the music-room, though small, wear an artistic aspect. Here began a series of happy hours. Here for the first time did I see Wagner in a proper light; the London fogs were dispelled, and with astonishment I beheld this mighty personality unfolding before me. He seemed in a much more social mood than he had in London. Hospitably he opened his house once a week, and many persons of note attended these gatherings."

Among the notabilities seen there were the authors and poets Baudelaire, Champfleury, Roche, Lorbac, Léroy, Gaspérini, besides Gustave Doré, Jules Ferry, Ollivier

and his wife (Liszt's daughter), F. Villot, conservator of the Imperial museums, and Berlioz.

CONCERTS IN PARIS AND BRUSSELS

So far, everything seemed to promise well enough. By way of calling the attention of the public to his presence and his projects three Wagner concerts were now determined upon. An application was made for the free use of the opera-house; but again the inevitable ill-luck interfered. No answer was received for so long a time that he gave up hope from this quarter and hired the Théâtre Ventadour at a high sum: hardly had he done this when the Opéra was placed at his disposal — too late, of course, for he could not break his contract at the "Italiens." Rehearsals were immediately begun, partly under the direction of Wagner, partly under Bülow, who had come to Paris to train the (chiefly amateur) chorus. The first concert took place on Jan. 25, 1860, and was followed by two others on Feb. 1 and 8. The programme was the same in each case: Overture to *Dutchman;* march with chorus, introduction to Act III., pilgrims' chorus, and overture from *Tannhäuser;* prélude of *Tristan;* prélude, introduction to Act III., and wedding chorus from *Lohengrin.* A programme which to-day an audience in a Western mining camp would almost be able to appreciate; but to the Parisian critics of three decades ago (if they really expressed their *honest* opinions), it was all caviare! Not so to the public, which included such eminent musicians as Auber, Gounod, Meyerbeer, Berlioz, Gevaërt, and Reyer. Champfleury states that "each piece was received with veritable enthusiasm."

The financial result of the three concerts, however, was worse than had been anticipated. The loss was over $1100, and poor Wagner, who had just succeeded in selling his Nibelung scores to Schott at Mayence, had to pay for trying to interest the Parisians in his early operas, by using up a large part of the scant money he had earned by several years' hard work on his Tetralogy! Hard work, hard luck, such was his fate until after his fiftieth year; and even then the change for the better was only apparent and temporary.

To repair the damage to his purse, he accepted an invitation to repeat his concerts (in March) at the Belgian Paris, Brussels. Here he was still less known than in Paris, but the fact that Brussels had been one of the first cities to propose a performance of *Lohengrin*, though it came to nothing, may have helped to decide him to take this step. A few decades later Brussels did become a Wagnerian centre; here almost all of his operas and music-dramas have been brought out with success [1] but at that time there was not sufficient interest in him to make his concerts a success; the first brought in 2123 francs, the second 1395 — not enough to pay expenses.[2]

Amusing anecdotes are told, *à propos* of these concerts, of the famous musical critic, historian, and theorist, Fétis — the same who disliked Beethoven's third style, and after reading whose essays on his own works and theories Wagner once exclaimed, "*What an ass!*" Being in a conciliatory mood, he — contrary to his custom —

[1] *Lohengrin* leads here as everywhere. It had twenty-seven performances in 1891–2, eight more than even the ever-popular *Faust*.

[2] E. Evenepoel, *Le Wagnerisme hors d'Allemagne*, p. 68, Paris: Fischbacher, a book in which the history of Wagnerism in Brussels is treated with great detail, and in an attractive style.

called on Fétis, who received him in anything but an amiable spirit. The conversation soon degenerated into a quarrel; Fétis questioned the sincerity of his visitor's art, used hard words, and finally showed him the door, but not before Wagner had got in his answer: "Sie abgestumpfter Greis, Sie wollen urtheilen über einen so gefühlvollen Mann wie ich!" ("You blasé old fogy — you presume to sit in judgment on a man of feeling like myself!") Fétis was greatly enraged at the artistic success of the concerts. At the Conservatoire, of which he was director, he even tried to secure the dismissal of one of the professors, A. Samuel, who had defended the German composer; and he also administered a severe rebuke to a large number of the students who had applauded the "music of the future," which at this time, the reader should remember, included nothing more advanced than *Lohengrin*.

TANNHÄUSER AND THE JOCKEY CLUB

In the interval between the Paris and the Brussels concerts a most important change had, however, taken place in Wagner's prospects. The financial failure of his concerts combined with the difficulty of engaging competent singers, especially when one has no money (and, as ill-luck would have it, the wealthy amateur whose operatic appetite was to have been stimulated by these concerts was prevented from attending them), had left no doubt as to the impracticability of the operatic scheme for which the concerts were to have been a preparation. Again he had turned his eyes towards Germany, determined to make a final effort to secure amnesty, when suddenly — a miracle happened: *Napo-*

leon had given an order that Tannhäuser should be performed at the Grand Opéra! The news came upon Wagner like a thunderbolt: he did not even know that *Tannhäuser* was under consideration at the Tuileries; did not know that he had any friends there who could or would bring about such a result. *Cherchez la femme!* She was the wife of the Austrian ambassador, Princess Pauline de Metternich, a special friend of the Empress; she felt pity for the persecuted composer, and she admired his operas — two of which had but recently been introduced with brilliant success in Vienna. Her recommendation, weighted by that of members of the German embassies, induced the Emperor to give his memorable order. It is said that Marshal Magnan, a great admirer of Wagner's music, also had a hand in the matter.

Tannhäuser at the Grand Opéra, and by special order of the Emperor, with *carte blanche* to spend as much as he chose on the best singers and the most sumptuous scenery! It seemed almost too good to believe.

"It was one of the grand emotions of Wagner's life," writes Gaspérini: "quick as a child in giving himself up, either to joyous or despondent feelings, he saw in this happy turn of fate the beginning of an entirely new life. In a few hours he had hatched out project upon project, conquest upon conquest."

"Never in my life," Wagner wrote to Liszt, underscoring each word of this sentence, "have the means for a first-rate performance been placed at my command so completely and unconditionally as this time. . . . It is up to date the first triumph of my art which I experience personally." Triumph? Alas three — but let us give the story in proper order.

Napoleon's order, while it aroused the jealousy of

certain French composers (and their friends) who were waiting to have operas of their own mounted, made Wagner the musical lion of the day — a real lion who could have his own way in everything. Regardless of expense (for the Emperor footed the bills) and under his own direction, a *mise-en-scène* was prepared by the best French scene-painters, such as he had never dreamt of in his most Utopian moments. In regard to the singers, he was to have free choice. Albert Niemann, the promising German tenor, was secured at a monthly salary of 6000 francs, with a special proviso that he must not appear in any opera except *Tannhäuser*. Madame Tedesco, who was to be Venus, received the same sum. For the part of Wolfram, Morelli was engaged at 3000 francs.

Surprise was created when Wagner announced his extra orchestral needs. He wanted twelve horns (more than could be found in Paris at that time), twelve trumpets, four trombones, four oboes, four flutes, four clarinets, four bassoons, etc.; he consented, however, to some reduction of these figures. Before the singers could be assigned their tasks, it was necessary to get the text translated into French. Ordinarily, this would have been the easiest thing in the world; the original verses would have been handed over to some hack rhymester who would have done them into slovenly French at so much a yard. That was not Wagner's idea of operatic translation. He must have not only an equivalent in words, but the accent of every word must correspond with the melodic accent. So important was this in his eyes that when he rewrote the music of the first scene, he used the French words in order to secure perfect cor-

respondence.[1] But for the rest of the book the words had to be adapted to the music. A willing victim to this difficult and thankless task was found in the poet Roche, whose acquaintance we made at the custom-house. Sardou, in the preface above referred to, gives a vivid description of the hard work to which this poor poet submitted in his efforts to please the exacting composer. Many days and nights were spent by the two in the attempt to find the right words and syllables and accents. Sunday, being an off-day for the customs official, was given up entirely to the translation. At seven in the morning they began, continuing without a pause till noon, till one — till two — till finally the pen dropped from the hand of the weary poet, who ventured to suggest that it was lunch time. "Ah, lunch; I had forgotten," was Wagner's reply; "let us take a hurried bite and begin again."

It was hard on the translator, no doubt, but Sardou forgets how much greater must have been the worry and toil of the coöperating author, "coming and going, with fiery eyes, furious gestures, playing passages on his piano, singing, exclaiming, and urging me to 'go on! go on!'" To complete this part of the tale, it may be added here that Roche died, broken-hearted, shortly after the failure of the opera on which he had placed so much hope; while Rudolph Lindau, who had assisted in the first version of the translation which the director of the Opéra refused to accept, brought suit against Wagner, in order to have his name placed as one of the translators on the play bill; but the courts decided against him, except as regards a pecuniary compensa-

[1] Gaspérini, p. 62.

tion, to which of course he was entitled. While he was still engaged on this translation, Wagner had another surprise: permission to return to Germany (Saxony excepted) had at last been granted him — for professional purposes, and provided permission was specially obtained in each case. Napoleon is said to have expressed surprise that Germany could so long treat a man like Wagner as an exile; and this, combined with the *Tannhäuser* affair, and the influence of the Princess von Metternich, has been heretofore assumed by biographers to have caused the Saxon officials to relent at last. These friends may have helped; but the prime-mover in this affair is indicated in a letter to Liszt dated Sept. 13, 1860. "At the Prussian embassy I was told that the Princess of Prussia would soon be at the Rhine; the Saxon ambassador told me it would be a gratification to him, and would also please the King of Saxony, if I thanked the Princess for her influence in the late decision concerning me."

On the strength of his partial amnesty he made a short excursion to the Rhine region, as far as Frankfort, where he met his wife, who had been undergoing treatment at Soden, near Wiesbaden. He also visited Baden-Baden, where he was graciously received by the Princess of Prussia.

"At Wiesbaden, Frankfurt, Darmstadt, and I know not how many other places," wrote Liszt, afterwards, "they were expecting Wagner, and wanted to see him direct or at least attend a performance of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*. Certainly there would have been no lack of enthusiastic demonstrations. But in face of a work like *Tristan*, where every one must say at first sight of the score: 'here is something unprecedented, wonderful, sublime,' the lubbers all crawl away and conceal themselves."

After returning to Paris from this flying visit to Germany, Wagner followed the advice of his friend Villot, of issuing the poems of the *Dutchman*, *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, and *Tristan* in a prose translation, with a preface explaining his system. This preface became an essay of some length and appeared subsequently in the German original under the title (in inverted commas) of "Zukunftsmusik," or "Music of the Future" (Vol. VII. pp. 62–99). It is one of the clearest and best of his literary efforts, but it should have appeared as a preface to *Tristan*, not to *Tannhäuser*. Instead of giving such simple elucidations, biographic and critical, as might have helped the French public and critics to correctly estimate the impending *Tannhäuser*, he made this essay a résumé of his later theoretical works, repeating, in a more concise and concrete form, his views on German, French, and Italian opera, conductors and singers, poets and composers, myth, melody, and tune, symphonies and music-dramas, reflection and inspiration, optimism and pessimism, the influence of other composers on his style, endless melody, "forest melody," the function of the orchestra and chorus, etc., with some interesting biographic details and critical remarks on his own operas, from *Rienzi* to *Tristan*. It is, in fact, a complete "Wagner Book," in the compass of thirty-seven pages, an essay so full of food for thought that no one interested in its author should fail to read and reread it. But it was not the proper thing for this occasion. For although he expressly states in it that *Tristan* is a longer step beyond *Tannhäuser* than that opera is beyond operas of the *Rienzi* style, the critics nevertheless applied to *Tannhäuser* all the "advanced theories" eluci-

dated in this essay, which in fact they chiefly read for the purpose of finding detached assertions to controvert or turn into ridicule. On the other hand, it may not be superfluous to suggest that while this action was unwise, genius of the first rank is guided in its doings by something higher than considerations of what is opportune and diplomatic. Wagner, having just completed *Tristan*, was full of that fascinating subject; and his remarks on true melody alone (to which we shall return in the chapter on *Tristan*) are of infinitely more importance to the world at large than the greatest possible success of *Tannhäuser* in Paris could have been.

There was one difficulty which came near wrecking the *Tannhäuser* project at the very beginning. At the first conference with Director Royer, the composer was informed that there was a serious omission in his work: according to the custom observed at the Opéra, there *must* be a ballet in the second act. The reply that a ballet in that act would be utterly out of place, inartistic, and absurd, made no impression whatever on Royer; nor did the proposal to enlarge the scene in the Venusberg at the beginning of the opera, where it was possible to introduce appropriately a sort of bacchanalian ballet, satisfy the director, who was at last forced to let the cat out of the bag. The point was, he admitted, not merely to have a ballet, but to have it in the second act; for the "aristocratic" subscribers, for whose benefit, chiefly, the ballet was maintained, dined late and did not enter their boxes till the second act had commenced; hence a ballet in the first act would be of no use to them. Royer frankly admitted that the very possibility of a successful issue of the opera depended

on this ballet in the second act, and this assertion was confirmed by the Minister of State. A more "diplomatic" man would have yielded the point, but Wagner's magnificent stubbornness in matters of principle made him prefer failure to a success dependent on the prostitution of his opera. He obstinately refused to accede to the director's wishes, declared that he would sooner take back his score and give up the performance altogether, and finally appealed to his protectress, the Princess von Metternich, whose intercession at the highest tribunal had the result that he was allowed to have his own way in this matter — at his own risk.

He had long felt that the first scene in *Tannhäuser* was weak and needed revision. Without any reference to the "aristocratic subscribers" (*i.e.* the Jockey Club), who would not see this part of the opera anyway, he therefore set about recomposing this scene entirely.

"I am retouching such weak points as I have found in the score," he writes to Liszt, on Sept. 13, 1860: "with much enjoyment I am rewriting the great Venus scene, and intend that it shall be greatly benefited thereby. The ballet-scene also will be entirely new, after a more elaborate plan which I have made for it."

Unfortunately, this scene, as imagined by him, presented difficulties insuperable to the ballet corps even of the Grand Opéra, an institution which had degenerated at that time into little more than a pretext for ballet performances, — that is, the crude, clumsy, and lascivious anatomical exhibitions and tip-toe dancing which, by some strange occultation of all æsthetic powers of discrimination, used to be considered "graceful." In his essay *On Conducting* (VIII. 386) Wagner relates

the result of his efforts to make something artistic of this ballet: —

"I called the ballet-master's attention to the awkward contrast which the lamentable skips and short *pas* of his mænads and bacchantes presented to my music, and demanded that, in place of this, his dancers should enact something bold and wildly sublime, resembling the groups and processions of bacchanals on antique reliefs. Whereupon the man whistled through his fingers and said: 'Ah, I take your point perfectly, but for such a thing I would need an entire corps of "first" dancers; were I to tell my dancers a word about this, and endeavor to give them the attitude you mean, we should at once have the cancan, and would be lost.'"[1]

As the rehearsals had already begun when these changes were made in the score, some confusion was created by them, especially among the singers. Niemann, who had been intimidated by hostile influences, created a sensation by refusing to sing the new version of his scene with Venus, and the composer was compelled to make excisions. Tedesco also became so impatient over the composer's attempts to teach her how to properly sing her part, that she could hardly be restrained from marking his face with her finger-nails. All the singers, and the players too, were disgusted at the unusual number of rehearsals exacted. There were no fewer than 164, all told.[2] The reader knows what a

[1] Wagner did not live to carry out his later plan of producing *Tannhäuser* at Bayreuth exactly as he had conceived it. The bacchanalian scene in question was, however, done at the Festival of 1891, without his supervision, in a manner which proved that it can be superbly executed without a corps of "first" dancers.

[2] Ch. Nuitter has given a detailed account of them in the *Bayreuther Festblätter*, from which it appears that there were seventy-three rehearsals with piano, all but nine of which Wagner attended; forty-five choral rehearsals, twenty-seven on the stage, all but three of which he supervised, and fourteen full rehearsals with orchestra, all of which were held in his presence.

tremendous worker Wagner was at rehearsals. To have more than a hundred of them was enough to break down even his iron constitution. He had an illness which verged on an attack of brain-fever, and made him suspend all activity for some weeks. On Dec. 15 he writes to Liszt that he may infer his condition from the fact that "the proof-sheets of *Rheingold*, which Schott was so anxious to publish before Christmas, have been lying on my table for seven weeks untouched."

Every moment of his time was, in fact, devoted to — or rather wasted on — the rehearsals, which lasted almost six months (Sept. 24, 1860, to March 10, 1861). His poor health, the terrible strain on his nerves, caused by a hundred rehearsals, would alone have sufficed to make him irritable and cause him to indulge in explosions of wrath. But what made the situation almost unendurable to a man of his temperament was the insulting and irrational conduct of the assisting artists, and especially of the conductor. Here was the composer of an opera which had made its way triumphantly to all the German opera-houses. He, the author of both the verses and the music, should have been looked upon, one would think, as the best and incontrovertible authority regarding its interpretation. But the singers became angry when he tried to teach them the correct phrasing of their parts, the ballet-master declared that his intentions could not be carried out, and, worst of all, the conductor obstinately refused to follow his instructions regarding tempo and modifications of tempo, on which the whole spirit of the opera depends. This conductor was Dietsch, the same man who, twenty years previously, had converted the Flying

Dutchman poem into an opera — which proved a dismal failure. Wagner soon discovered that this man was absolutely incompetent to conduct *Tannhäuser,* while his obstinacy in refusing to listen to suggestions threatened to ruin everything. An appeal was therefore made to Director Royer that he himself should be allowed to conduct the first performances; but this request, being contrary to all rules and precedence at the Opéra, was politely refused by the Director, and, on appeal, by Count Walewski, Minister of State.[1] The orchestra sided with Dietsch and the authorities in this matter, not from any hostility to Wagner, — for in 1875, when the conductor of the Opéra wanted to give the bâton to Gounod, on a *Faust* night, the orchestra opposed the change too, — but because custom is custom, and change implies extra labor. The result was, as Nuitter remarks, that

"Wagner, with all his insistence, his energy, his influential patrons, had to resign himself to see the orchestra conducted by another, and conducted contrary to his intentions. Those who attended the rehearsals will never forget them. The conductor at his desk was beating his time; while the composer, seated two steps away from him, on the stage, by the prompter's box, was beating his own time, and beating it with hands and feet, raising a terrible noise and a cloud of dust on the stage floor."

Would it be possible to conceive anything more extraordinary, more idiotic, than such treatment of a dramatic author? After all, the foolish, vain, and incompetent Dietsch was but a sample of the average conductor with whom Wagner had to deal all his life. If, under

[1] The interesting correspondence on this subject is published in the article by Ch. Nuitter in the *Bayreuther Festblätter.*

such circumstances, he lost his temper, and became violent, everybody exclaimed, "What a disagreeable man! No wonder he has enemies!" No wonder indeed! And no wonder that, as Gaspérini relates: —

"When the day of the performance arrived, the unhappy composer, irritated, wounded, ill, dissatisfied with everybody, himself included, had lost all hope, and was almost wishing for a cataclysm to deliver him at a blow from this wretched life. He went to the Opera-house, not like one about to do battle, but had himself dragged there like one condemned to death. In the few days preceding the decisive hour, he had forgotten his dearest friends; he had fallen a victim to a deep, incurable despair; the only thing he hoped for was deliverance, rest."

In his own account of this episode Wagner writes (VII. 189): —

"What kind of a reception my opera would receive at the hands of the public, was, under such circumstances, almost a matter of indifference to me; the most brilliant success could not have induced me to personally attend a series of performances, since I was altogether too much dissatisfied."

But he could hardly have suspected what a terrible *fiasco* was awaiting him, even though rumor must have acquainted him in advance with the fact that there were several conspiracies to frustrate all chance of success. The regular claque was offended and determined to have revenge because he had demanded its suppression, since he wanted an honest success or none at all; the journalists (on whom he had failed to call) had banded together, not only to jump on him after the event, in their articles, but to "demonstrate" against him during the performance. But the most formidable enemy was that scum of human society (which, future generations will

find to their amazed amusement, used to be regarded as "society" itself) the *jeunesse dorée*, the young "aristocracy," chiefly members of the Jockey Club, whose mistresses were in the corps de ballet, and who angrily resented the refusal to provide their habitual ballet in the second act. Suppose, they reasoned, *Tannhäuser* should be a success; then this stupid opera would be given week after week, month after month, and they would have to go, night after night, without the only feature in an operatic performance which interested them. This, of course, was not to be tolerated. The would-be reformer of the opera must be punished, crushed, exterminated.

It is needless to describe the performances, the first of which occurred on March 13, 1861, in detail, or to point out what numbers the conspirators had previously agreed to pass by, and on which to combine their demonstrations. On the first evening the opposition marred various passages by outbursts of derisive laughter and other expressions of ill-will; but the public, anxious to hear the much-talked-about opera, endeavored to suppress the cabal by means of counter-demonstrations of applause, so that the general result was undecided. This induced the opposition to redouble its efforts on the second evening. The members of the Jockey Club bought a number of penny whistles with which to enforce their sentiments. Up to their usual time of arrival, about the middle of the second act, all had been quiet, except that certain tuneful numbers had been applauded; when suddenly an infernal tumult broke loose and continued to the end of the opera with such persistent malignity that most of the music was drowned in the noise ("I know not if it

was even sung," Baudelaire remarks of Tannhäuser's narrative).

Apart from these cabals, the audience behaved in a most honorable manner, as Wagner himself testifies. Its love of justice and fair-play were abundantly demonstrated, and to see it espousing the cause of his much-maligned music, defending it, hour after hour, with salvos of applause and efforts to down the noisy clique, filled him with feelings of warm gratitude. But its applause, hisses at the boxes, and cries of "throw the Jockeys out doors," had no more effect than the efforts of the Emperor and Empress to preserve peace by their intercession and demonstrative applause. The battle was lost; the Jockey Club had done its work well; its hirelings had not only insulted the composer and the singers, but members of the audience, including the composer's wife and the Princess von Metternich. To end these insults, Wagner decided to withdraw the opera, but finally consented to a third performance on condition that it be given on a Sunday, when the "aristocratic" subscribers would not occupy their boxes, thus giving the public at large an opportunity to hear *Tannhäuser*. But the Jockey ruffians, fearing that in their absence the opera might win a pronounced and irrevocable success, attended, contrary to their custom, this Sunday performance, with all their hirelings, and the resulting tumult was even greater than before, the embittered audience, frustrated in its desire to hear the opera, being restrained from acts of personal violence against the vulgar offenders only by the high rank of the "aristocratic" rowdies who led the attack.

Director Royer had apparently been under the impres-

sion, after the first performance, that the derisive laughter which followed certain numbers was excited by the music itself, and he had therefore induced the composer, though with difficulty, to cancel some of the finest passages in the opera, including the young shepherd's quaint melody, the return of Venus, and the hunting horns with the dogs! It was, of course, useless trouble; the cause of the demonstrations was not the music or the dogs, but the absence of a ballet.[1]

After the second performance Royer could no longer affect blindness as to the real *casus belli:* he asked for more "cuts," in order to save time to introduce a ballet, on his own responsibility, in the second act. Wagner's reply was in a tone of resignation. "Consider me as if I were dead, and do whatever you please," was the substance of it. He had lost all interest in the affair, and did not attend the third performance at all. The "Idealistin" above referred to relates that after this third performance she met some of her friends in the foyer and went to Wagner's house. It was past two o'clock when they arrived, but they found the composer and his wife calmly at their supper.

"He received the news of the third and most violent battle of all with a smile, and joked with Olga, saying he had heard that she had hissed his music. But by the trembling of the hand he held out to me I felt that he was deeply agitated. Although all the dis-

[1] "These poor dogs," says M. Jullien, "that had aroused the indignation of fastidious spectators, and served as a pretext for some high-toned commonplaces, contributed singularly, some time later, to the success of a grand drama, *La Jeunesse du Roi Henri*, by Lambert Thiboust and Ponson du Terrail, which was produced in 1864 at the Châtelet Theatre. The authors had simply borrowed Wagner's idea, and had every reason to congratulate themselves for so doing."

grace of this proceeding fell back on its perpetrators, still, one more hope of the composer was gone, and the rough path of life which never seemed to grow smoother, again lay before him in its dismal and tortuous windings."

On the following morning the Director received this letter: —

"Since the members of the Jockey Club are not willing to permit the Parisian public to hear my opera at the Imperial Academy of Music, except on condition of having a ballet at the usual hour of their appearance in the theatre, I hereby withdraw my score and beg you to have the kindness to communicate to his Excellency the Minister of State my resolution, with which I believe I shall deliver him from a very embarrassing position."

Count Walewsky and Director Royer, after discussing the situation, came to the conclusion that, although the contract did not allow the composer thus to withdraw his work at will, they would accede to his request; so they shelved the opera, though with reluctance, because it promised to be one of the greatest financial successes ever witnessed at the Imperial Academy. The receipts for the first evening had been 7491 francs; of the second, 8415; of the third 10764; fabulous prices were paid for some of the tickets resold. Hundreds of persons were unable to get in, and there were enough bookings to sell out the house for many performances ahead. The extra expenses of this opera had amounted to about $20,000; much of this was a dead loss, although the costumes and *mise-en-scène* were afterwards partly used in Meyerbeer and other operas.

The loss to the poor composer was a more serious matter. Financial ruin was again staring in his face. True, he was no longer likely to stand face to face with

absolute starvation, as he had stood in the same city twenty years before, when the foundation was laid for those stomach troubles which made him suffer so much for the rest of his life, and so greatly diminished his power of working; but poverty had long before the event just related forced him to give up his pleasant residence and seek a domicile where his health had to suffer and domestic enjoyment was out of the question. The "Idealistin" relates that when she returned to Paris, in 1861, she found the Wagner family

> "no longer in the pleasant little home of the preceding winter, but in the second story of a large house inhabited by many families, in one of the noisiest, darkest streets of Paris. This change had been made from pecuniary necessities. It cut into my heart deeply to see this. I felt how terrible it must be for Wagner to live in so uncongenial a dwelling."

If *Tannhäuser* had not been deliberately driven off the stage by a pack of ruffians, he would have been able to recover his financial balance in a few months. According to the custom at the Opéra, he was to receive 500 francs for each performance, half of which, for the first twenty evenings was to go to the translators; as but three performances were given, he received 750 francs ($150) for about a year's hard and wearing work and worry! This is at the rate of almost half a dollar a day. Of course it was all his own fault. He was a German composer, and as such he had no right to expect more than fifty cents a day. The main thing was that the Jockey Club had had its fun. Bull-fighting was forbidden in Paris at that time, on the ground of cruelty; but composer-baiting — ah, that is quite another affair!

THE PARIS VERSION

There were, nevertheless, a few consoling featu about this operatic disaster. The Emperor and Empı remained his friends, and were willing to use tl influence to prevent further disturbances. Thousa expressed sincere disappointment at the withdrawal the opera. A petition protesting against the outr — which eminent writers pronounced a national (grace — was handed around and signed by many mu cians, artists, and men of letters. There was evei project to build a special theatre for the performance Wagner's works and other good operas, abandoning Grand Opéra to the Jockey Club and their dancing n tresses. But Wagner had no desire to make furt efforts — not only on account of the attendant annoyan and waste of time, but because he felt that he could hope for a satisfactory interpretation of his opera un given circumstances. Indeed, in the letter which wrote on the day following the third performance (V 187) — a remarkably impartial, dignified, and impress document — he uses as an unction for his wound thought that after all *Tannhäuser* could not have wo *genuine* success, as a music-drama, because the perf mance, as a whole, was so poor; so that the ill wind bl this good that the disturbance concealed from the au ence the inadequacy of the interpretation.

Furthermore, the Paris *Tannhäuser* year cannot be p nounced a complete loss in its author's life, for it g rise to that superb essay on *Music of the Future*, and still more superb additions to the score which are refer to as the "Paris version" of *Tannhäuser*, which

been introduced, within the last few years, at the leading German opera-houses with such brilliant financial and artistic results. The whole score was touched up, here and there, the vocal contest in the second act shortened and improved. But the principal changes were in the first act. The shortened overture leads into the magnificently heathen and orgiastic Bacchanale, the most tumultuous, dissonant, and delirious composition ever written — but how admirably suited to the situation ! — the wild revelry of the bacchantes, the cupids in the air shooting love-poisoned arrows, the rape of Europa, the decoy song of the sirens, Leda and the swan, and the other scenes previously described. We may realize the voluptuous fancies of an opium-eater, without the bad after-effects, by simply listening to this ballet music — if it be proper to apply this term to a composition which is as superior to ordinary ballet music as a symphony is to a quadrille.

Objection has been made to the mixture of Wagner's "second and third styles" in the Paris version of *Tannhäuser*, and there is no doubt some force in it; what we must regret, however, is not that the first scene was rewritten in the *Tristan* style, but that the composer, instead of wasting a year on the Parisians, did not employ his time in rewriting the whole of *Tannhäuser* in the *Tristan* style; retaining the motives, but elaborating them in the much more finished polyphonic and orchestral art of his "third style," as he did in the new duo and the Bacchanale.[1]

[1] I know of no task more fascinating and instructive than a minute comparison of the old *Tannhäuser* with the Paris version; noting how an altered rhythm here, a new modulation there, changes the character of the melody, and gives the words (which in some cases were altered too) a deeper dramatic import; how the musical motives are repeated

FRENCH POETS VERSUS CRITICS

Another pleasant result of the *Tannhäuser* epi was the evidence it once more afforded that the of genius were always the first champions of Wa against the professional critics and Philistines. I s not waste space by quoting from the countless venon and silly articles written before and after the Wa concerts and the *Tannhäuser* representation; the foll ing judgment of an eminent French critic of our per M. Jullien, on his colleagues of thirty years ago s up the situation from a French point of view: —

"This whole *Tannhäuser* affair, from whatever point of we regard it, is anything but honorable for us. But the sa part of it is not the infernal row plotted by high-livers after dinner-cup and before their supper, but the attitude of the which was not like the others a dependent of the *corps de b* but naïvely fancied itself face to face with an execrable work, of a chance composer. The newspapers vied with each other course of abuse, a tournament of ignorance, and for weeks, even after the composer had fled from Paris, they abused the and vilified the man with unprecedented violence."

In the long list of critics there were only a few l orable exceptions, who treated Wagner like judges

and combined with the subtle psychologic art of the *Tristan* style; much warmer, richer, and more passionate the orchestral colorin become; and, most significant of all, the thrilling use made of a t derived from the song of the sirens, and developed by the use of *tanesque* harmonies, into full swelling trombone chords that strik suggest the love-music in *Tristan*. It is heard the moment the ir cated bacchantes on the stage rush into the arms of their lovers. resemblance is not a mere unconscious reminiscence of the *Tr* style, but has, as the reader need not be told, a psychologic signific based on amorous affinity.

gentlemen; among them were Reyer, Weber, Franck-Marie, and Gaspérini. But Wagner's most interesting French champions were the poets, who took up the cudgels in his behalf; nor was it surprising, as Baudelaire wrote, that "men of letters, in particular, should show their sympathy with a musician who glories in being a poet and a dramaturgist." Several years before *Tannhäuser* was produced in Paris, the greatest literary artist among French poets, Théophile Gautier, had heard some of Wagner's music in Germany and was delighted with it; he found it "full of melody, even Italian melody," of "great beauty," "irresistibly effective," and expresses a wish that *Tannhäuser* should be performed in Paris. Gerard de Nerval heard *Lohengrin* at Weimar, in 1850, and wrote a favorable account of it, dwelling on the growing appreciation following repeated hearing. We have seen how the poet Roche welcomed Wagner to Paris, and became his translator. Champfleury promised the assistance of his pen if needed, and nobly kept his promise in newspaper articles and in a pamphlet wherein he defended his friend against some absurd charges, and described the effect of his works on him; also his personal appearance, the chin being, in his opinion, his most characteristic feature. He declares that his music fills him "with joy and enthusiasm"; and he adds a few biographic facts which lead him to exclaim: "I search but find nowhere a martyr comparable to Wagner."

Of all the French poets Baudelaire wrote most interestingly of the German poet-musician. His seventy-page pamphlet *Richard Wagner et Tannhäuser à Paris* is one of the most valuable of all contributions to the extremely voluminous literature on its subject. He

relates that after the first hearing of this music it seemed to him as if a spiritual change had been worked in him; "it was a revelation." He went about everywhere seeking opportunities to hear more of it, to read about it; the mysterious repetitions of themes (Leading Motives) fascinated him especially, as a striking novelty with a deep significance; and he purchased the scores in order to study and solve the mystery. He defends Wagner against the absurd charge that his works are the result of "reflection" instead of "inspiration." All great poets must be critics, he says; and he asks, pertinently, whether Leonardo da Vinci, Hogarth, and Reynolds were less great painters because they also analyzed the principles of their art. He points out the astounding combination of titanic power with refined subtlety in this music, the nervous intensity, the violent passionateness.

"Wagner resembles the antique writers by the passionate energy of his utterances, and he is to-day the truest representative of the modern world. Will, desire, concentration, nervous intensity, explosiveness, are manifested in all his works. I believe that neither am I mistaken myself nor shall I mislead any one if I affirm that these are the principal characteristics of the phenomenon we call *genius*."

He sums up the various causes which led to the fall of *Tannhäuser*, and points out the absurdity of calling it a "failure": "*Tannhäuser* was not even heard."

BERLIOZ, AUBER, AND ROSSINI

Of the Parisian professional critics Berlioz is the only one on whose attitude it is worth while to dwell here; not

only because, though ignored as a composer, he was looked on as the most influential and formidable of the musical critics, but because he had been a personal friend of Wagner and was supposed, by public opinion, to be his follower or colleague. His extraordinary antics on this occasion proved a source of mortification to his own friends, and of joy to the enemies of *Tannhäuser* and its author.

These two revolutionary composers met occasionally during Wagner's first sojourn in Paris, and it will be remembered that Berlioz made favorable mention, in one of his feuilletons, of the novelette, *A Pilgrimage to Beethoven*. Louis de Fourcaud relates that when Berlioz called on Wagner the first time, he found his own treatise on Instrumentation lying on the table, and was so much pleased and moved thereby that he warmly embraced his German colleague. In Dresden, a year or two later, just after Wagner had been appointed royal conductor, Berlioz arrived to give some concerts; his friend's first official act, as Berlioz himself relates, was to assist in arranging these concerts, "which he did with zeal and hearty good will." Eight years later Wagner had occasion, in his *Opera and Drama*, to discuss Berlioz's talent (III. 348–350), which he describes as "an enormous musical intelligence," inspired by "a truly artistic and consuming aspiration." His great achievement, he says, is the development of orchestral resources, which he carried to a "miraculous" point; but he went too far: he enabled a musician to dress up the most empty and inartistic material in such a way as to produce an astounding effect. In a word, the author of *Opera and Drama* mixed up praise and censure, precisely

as Berlioz had done in describing *Rienzi* and the *Dutchman*, when he heard them at Dresden.

Liszt was a great admirer of Berlioz, for whose operas he made the same efforts at Weimar as for Wagner's, but with less satisfactory results. In the letters from which we have so often quoted there are frequent references to Berlioz. On Sept. 8, 1852, Wagner writes: "Believe me, I *love* Berlioz, even though he avoids me suspiciously and obstinately: he knows me not — but I know *him*. If there is one of whom I have expectations, it is Berlioz; not on the road by which he arrived at the absurdities of the *Faust* symphony," but by writing real music-dramas prepared for him by a poet, in place of his own concoctions from Goethe and Shakespeare. Berlioz, for his part, wrote to Liszt that he had not read the critique on him in *Opera and Drama*, and would not resent it in the least, as he himself had fired too many pistol-shots to mind being used as an occasional target. In 1855, when Berlioz and Wagner conducted the two Philharmonic Societies in London, they frequently met, and Wagner wrote that he would "bring one acquisition from England — a cordial and intimate feeling of friendship with Berlioz, which is reciprocated." Berlioz again wrote to Liszt (quoted in No. 122): "Wagner attracts me remarkably, and if we are both eccentric, our eccentricities at any rate run in parallel lines" (he adds an amusing sketch of these "eccentric lines"). Wagner made efforts to secure Berlioz's scores through the composer; but as he publisher would not grant any more complimentary copies, he failed to get them. In 1856 Berlioz heard *Lohengrin* at Weimar. He possessed the score and wrote to its composer at

Zürich, begging for the *Tannhäuser* score to add to it, promising some of his own works in return. I mention these facts in order to show that Berlioz had plenty of opportunities to become acquainted with his friend's works. How he profited by these opportunities, and what he did in return for the "zeal and hearty good will" with which Wagner had helped him in Dresden, we shall now see, going back, for a moment, to the three Paris concerts and *Tannhäuser*.

Berlioz commented on these concerts in the *Journal des Débats*. He spoke well of some of the pieces, especially the introductions to the first and third acts of *Lohengrin;* whereas the *Tristan* prelude he confessed he did not comprehend: "I have read this strange page, and reread it; I have listened to it with the deepest attention, and a lively desire to discover its meaning: well, I must confess, I have not yet the slightest idea of what the composer wanted to say." So far Berlioz was above reproach and simply doing his duty as a critic. But this criticism is followed by a long and most ridiculous arraignment of the "music of the future," written after a method that would do honor to a Greek sophist. He puts two cases: (1) if the music of the future means such and such things, — here he enumerates a number of principles to which any conscientious composer, past, present, or future, must necessarily subscribe, — then I believe in it; (2) but if the music of the future means such and such things, — here he mentions maxims like these: one must break all rules; use no melody; maltreat the ear; use atrocious modulations; pay no regard to singers, and use only the most difficult and ugly intervals; etc., — then, he says, I do not believe in it. "*Non Credo.*"

Note how slyly this is put; he does not *say* that Wagner represents this latter kind of "music of the future," but no one can help reading it between the lines. The whole journalistic world, as a matter of course, took this *Non Credo* as a vicious attack on Wagner, and it contributed more than anything else to the disgraceful exhibition the Parisian critics made of themselves over the *Tannhäuser* episode.

Like everybody else, Wagner took this *Non Credo* as a personal attack on himself — an unprovoked stab in the back by one whom he supposed to be a friend. He accordingly wrote in the same paper, a reply which every one who wishes to realize how much nobler and more sincere a character Wagner was than Berlioz should read (reprinted in VII. 59). Pathetic are the words in which he explains why he came to Paris: —

> "For eleven years it has been impossible for me to hear my own works, and I shudder at the thought of remaining any longer perhaps the only German who has not heard my *Lohengrin*. Not ambition, nor a desire to popularize my operas, were therefore the motives which induced me to seek French hospitality," etc.

He goes on to explain that he himself never dreamed of founding a new school of music and calling it the "music of the future," as so many — including, to his surprise, even Berlioz — seemed to imagine; that term was invented for derisive purposes by Professor Bischoff of Cologne. In conclusion, he expresses his regrets at having ever written any theoretical treatises; for if even Berlioz, a specialist and colleague, so grossly misunderstood and misreported him, what could be expected of the general public?

No attention was, of course, paid by the journalists to this reply, except that it was pronounced "ill-advised" and "egotistic," while Berlioz, in true Parisian style, tried to turn the matter into a joke by saying that *he* was worse off than Wagner, since, if the latter was the only one who had not heard his operas, he himself was the only one who had heard his. And now note his tactics over the *Tannhäuser* affair. If jealousy alone can have inspired his *Non Credo,* this feeling was intensified a hundredfold by the announcement of the acceptance of Wagner's score at the Grand Opéra. He had been hoping that his *Troyens* would be selected — and now the choice had fallen on this foreign opera! He was so angry that he did not trust himself to write about the *Tannhäuser* performance, but engaged a friend to do it for him. His private letters, however, give a ghastly insight into the incredible malevolence and spite which jealousy was able to excite in this composer: —

"Wagner is turning the singers, the orchestra, and chorus of the Opéra into goats. . . . The last general rehearsal was atrocious, it is said, and did not end before one in the morning." "Every one I see is infuriated; the Minister of State came from a rehearsal the other day in an angry mood. . . . Wagner is evidently a fool. . . . I allowed d'Ortigue to write my article; I wish to protest by my silence, ready to speak later if pushed to it." After the first performance: "What outbursts of laughter! The Parisian showed himself to-day in an entirely new aspect; he laughed at a bad musical style, at the capers of a burlesque orchestra; he laughed at the naïvetés of an oboe; . . . as for the horrors, they were splendidly hissed." After the second performance: "Worse than the first. The audience did not laugh any more; it was furious; it hissed enough to break up everything, in spite of the presence of the Emperor and Empress. . . . When Wagner went down the

staircase, the unfortunate man was openly treated as a scamp, an insolent fellow, an idiot. As for myself, *I am cruelly avenged.*"

And this Berlioz, in public opinion, carefully fostered by unscrupulous scribblers, is one of the composers whom Wagner "abused" and "maltreated"!

From this disgusting spectacle of jealous spite let us turn for a moment to two other composers whom Wagner met at this time in Paris. He relates how one evening he met Auber, who inquired about the subject of *Tannhäuser*. After the story had been briefly told him, he replied: "Ah, there will be something to see! that means a success, you may feel assured." "What he finally thought of my *Tannhäuser*," he adds, "I have not heard. I assume he 'understood not a word of it.'" This guess seems to have been near the mark; at any rate, the newspapers reported two "bon-mots" of Auber: "Wagner is Berlioz without melody" (!) and his music is "like reading, without stopping to take breath, a book that has no commas or periods."

To Rossini, also, various bon-mots were attributed and industriously circulated in France, England, and Germany. He was reported to have served an admirer of Wagner's at dinner with sauce without fish, saying that that must be acceptable to one who liked harmony without melody. He was also reported to have said to Wagner, when the latter protested that he did not intend to annihilate all the great men of the past, "Ah, my dear Mr. Wagner, if you *could* do that!" One fine day, however, Rossini became angry at these silly "jokes" fathered on him, and wrote a letter to a Paris journal disclaiming them, protesting against the "malicious hoax," and exclaiming that he did not presume to pass

judgment on Wagner's music, since he had never heard any of it except a march, which he liked very well. This letter appeared in the paper it was addressed to, but the other papers, which had chuckled over the apocryphal jokes, ignored it absolutely, as was their wont; so the "bon-mots" in question have continued to circulate as Rossini's down to the present day. Nay more: the Philistine insolence which fancies itself so superior to genius, has endeavored to show that Wagner acted like a dunce in face of Rossini and his wit. Wagner relates (VIII. 279) that Rossini's letter, in which he protested against having such silly "witticisms" attributed to him, made such a pleasant impression on him that he called on his colleague to exchange sentiments. Rossini remarked that he felt conscious of having talent, and that he might have done something worth while (*arriver à quelque chose*) under favorable circumstances (if, for instance, he had lived in Germany); but the operatic conditions in Italy were such as to counteract and suppress all efforts aiming at a higher art ideal; with other remarks to the same effect. One of Wagner's French biographers, M. Jullien, after referring to these utterances, remarks that Rossini, seeing Wagner ready to swallow this "irony," enlarged on the subject without his visitor's "suspecting the farce for a moment. One cannot be more cruel — nor more naïf."

It is worth while to expose the silly insolence of this comment, which has passed into several other books. In the first place, Rossini was a gentleman, and gentlemen do not quiz their visitors. Secondly, a man of Wagner's powers of sarcasm and keen sense of humor could not have been taken in for a moment if Rossini had been

so ill-mannered as to try to make fun of him. Thirdly, if Rossini had spoken ironically, the joke would be all on *him;* for he is to-day little but a name and a memory in the musical world, and the opinion of himself which he gave to his visitor is *the one now accepted everywhere.* He was a man of genius, who, in a less shallow field than that of Italian opera, might have created immortal masterworks; but in Italy, where every carnival demanded a new opera, usually written in a few weeks, stage compositions could hardly have more than an ephemeral value. Hence it is natural to find that his only opera which is likely to survive his century, *Tell,* was written for Paris; but even there the conditions were unfavorable; *Tell* was shamefully mutilated and maltreated, and this is no doubt the main reason why Rossini did not write another opera for the remaining thirty-nine years of his life: he found no recognition for the *better* qualities of his genius, and not being, like Wagner, a hero who was willing to fight for the recognition of these qualities, he stopped composing altogether. His biographers have preserved remarks of his, similar to that which he addressed to Wagner, showing that he was quite aware that much of his work was ephemeral. His teacher, moreover, used to call him the "little German," because of his love of Haydn and Mozart; and later on we find him attempting to introduce Mozartean reforms in Italian opera — which, however, were received with almost as violent opposition as Wagner's reforms were in Germany and elsewhere. As one of his biographers, Mr. Joseph Bennett (surely not a prejudiced witness in this case) exclaims: "To what heights might the author of *William Tell* have risen had his early years been spent

amid a people less tolerant of absurdities!" This is what Rossini referred to in his "ironic" conversation with Wagner. And the moral of this little tale is that an attempt to make out that Wagner was a fool is very apt to take the direction of a boomerang.

KING LUDWIG FINDS WAGNER

In commenting on Wagner's difficulties in Lor
and his reported resignation as Philharmonic condu
I spoke of the fact that the Germans at home chuc
gleefully over the discomfiture of one of their cou
men abroad, where other nations would have felt
noyed if not indignant. The same noble German
came to the front during and after the *Tannhäuser*
Among the most ill-mannered rowdies who preve
the gentleman and ladies in the Opéra from hearing
work were not a few Germans; and prominent ar
the critical mud-slingers was the German, Albert W
who, for the thirty years following, devoted his w
attempts to turn his countryman's personality and n
to ridicule and contempt, in the columns of the *Fi*
As regards the Germans at home, the *Frankfurter Co*
sationsblatt wrote: "German newspapers have made l
to intone over the fall of a German in Paris son
joy, full of open or disguised scorn, and hollow tira
True, when, after his long exile, he returned t
fatherland, the crowded spectators at such performa
of his operas as he chose to attend, almost broke
necks trying to catch a glimpse of him — just as
would have done in case of a notorious murderer
court-room. But real sympathy, sympathy that is

ing to make some sacrifices *à la* Liszt, and that would have enabled him to realize his art-ideals, was nowhere to be found.

IS TRISTAN IMPOSSIBLE?

In a preceding page I stated that the real motive that took Wagner to Paris was the hope of bringing about a model performance of *Tristan;* to this he intended to invite German managers and conductors, to whose tender mercies he might then be able to give up his music-drama with some hopes of attaining correct performances. When he found that even *Tannhäuser* could not yet be acclimated on French soil, he saw the folly of hoping anything for *Tristan,* so he returned to Germany as the only country where his desire could possibly be gratified. There were hopes that Weimar might undertake to bring out *Tristan;* Prague also coquetted with the idea; but these plans came to naught. The Duke of Baden (to whom the score is dedicated) was still favorable to the project, but Schnorr and his wife had left Karlsruhe, and with their successors the conviction soon gained ground that *Tristan* was "impossible," as Dingelstedt had also pronounced it at Weimar, and had even offered to wager with Liszt that it could not be performed anywhere else. Niemann had told Wagner that he believed the King of Hanover would be inclined to undertake a model performance of the new work, but this also led to no results. Dresden was still closed, for political reasons; at Berlin and Munich the managers and conductors were hostile; there remained only Vienna, and the Opera there seemed indeed the best place for the experiment: "It has better singers

than other theatres," he wrote to Liszt, "and — unique phenomenon — it is conducted by a capable musician, with whom one can explain himself, which, as you know, cannot be said of any other German theatre."

To Vienna, accordingly, he wended his way, arriving there on May 9, 1861. Twenty-nine years had elapsed since his first visit to this "Asiatic city." Had he returned four years sooner, he would have found himself in a city where not one of his operas had yet been performed! Let me repeat this extraordinary fact in a more striking form: *Vienna did not hear a single one of Wagner's operas till he was forty-four years old and had composed Rienzi, Dutchman, Tannhäuser, Lohengrin, Rheingold, Walküre, half of Siegfried, and all of Tristan* — all but three of his works! It seems incredible — yet two other German capitals, Munich and Stuttgart, were in the same predicament. In reading the outbursts of despair in the impoverished Wagner's letters it is well to bear these astounding facts in mind. When Vienna did at last hear *Tannhäuser* (1857), it was not at the Imperial Opera, but at a suburban theatre. "Religious" objections (the references to the Pope and Rome!) had kept it quarantined from the Imperial theatre! *Lohengrin* was the first to be given at this house, in 1858; *Tannhäuser* followed in 1859. Both had been received with enthusiasm, although it is characteristic of Vienna that Nestroy's parody of *Tannhäuser* reached its twenty-fifth performance before the opera itself.

Shortly before going to Vienna, Wagner had written to Praeger from Karlsruhe: —

"Was ever work like mine created for no purpose? Is it miserable egoism, the stupidest vanity? It matters not what it is, but

of this I feel positive; yes, as positive as that I live, and that is, my *Tristan and Isolde*, with which I am now consumed, does not find its equal in the world's library of music. Oh, how I yearn to hear it; I am feverish; I feel worn; perhaps that causes me to be agitated and anxious, but my *Tristan* has been finished now these three years and has not been heard. When I think of this I wonder whether it will be with this as with *Lohengrin*, which now is thirteen years old, and has been as dead to me. But the clouds seem breaking, are breaking. . . . I am going to Vienna soon. There they are going to give me a surprise. It is supposed to be kept a secret from me, but a friend has informed me they are going to bring out *Lohengrin*."

Three days after his arrival in Vienna this special performance of *Lohengrin* took place — the first the composer himself had ever heard, thirteen years after the creation of the opera! It was of course a gala night, singers and players did their very best, the house was crowded, the applause tumultuous; after each act all eyes were turned toward the box where the composer sat; again and again he had to bow his acknowledgments, and at the close he was called before the curtain three times and made a brief speech of thanks. In his later writings he repeatedly refers to this "intoxicating May night," but notes also the characteristic fact that, with all this enthusiasm in the air, he was, nevertheless, unable to secure a few rehearsals at which he wished to correct some errors in the interpretation! Always the same story! As a whole, however, the performance had been good enough to inspire him anew with the belief that Vienna was the proper place for *Tristan;* and when the score was formally accepted, his heart leaped once more with joy at the thought that at last his prospects looked brighter. Alas! the everlasting alas!

The rehearsals were to begin in the autumn (1861), but they were frustrated by a long illness of the tenor Ander. In the following summer Ander had seemingly recovered his voice, and the outlook was again bright. The rest of the story may be told in Wagner's own words:[1] —

"Ever since the first procrastination of the *Tristan* rehearsals, the musical press of Vienna had found its favorite occupation in the attempt to prove that a performance of my work was impossible under any circumstances. That no singer could hit on my notes, or remember them — this assertion became the motto of all who reported, wrote, and spoke about me, in any part of Germany. A French vocalist, a great one, it is true, Madame Viardot, expressed her surprise to me one day, that it was possible for the German artists to make such assertions about the impossibility of singing this and that; she asked if musical people were not musicians in Germany as elsewhere? Well, to this I knew not just what to reply, especially in face of a songstress who had once, in Paris, sung a whole act of *Isolde* at sight. As a matter of fact, my German singers were not so incompetent as report made them: my Viennese singers, also, guided by the uncommonly intelligent efforts and zeal of my esteemed friend, Kapellmeister Esser, at last gave me the great pleasure of singing the whole opera faultlessly and effectively to a pianoforte accompaniment. How it could have got into their heads, later on, to assert that they could not learn their *rôles* — for this was reported to me — remains a riddle to me, with the solution of which I will not fatigue my head: perhaps it was done to please our famous musical critics of Vienna and other cities, who were so astoundingly anxious to prove that my work was impossible, and who would have felt positively insulted if a performance had succeeded nevertheless. Perhaps, again, all that was reported to me is untrue; anything is possible, for the doings of our press are often anything but Christian."[2]

[1] *Bayreuther Blätter*, 1890, p. 176.

[2] Obviously Wagner here had in mind, among others, Dr. Hanslick, who felt called upon to defend himself (*Musikal. Skizzenbuch*, p. 7) by saying that tenor Ander himself told him that "by the time he had

Whatever may have been the cause of the postponement of *Tristan*, the fact remains that its performance was finally abandoned as "impossible" — after fifty-four rehearsals (Nov. 9, 1862, to March 24, 1863); and it was not till *twenty years* later (Oct. 4, 1883) that *Tristan* had its first performance in Vienna!

WHY WAGNER GAVE CONCERTS

The composer of *Tristan* was at Moscow when he received notice from Vienna that that work had been abandoned. He was hardly surprised. "To be frank," he says, "I was tired of the matter, and thought no more about it." But what was he doing in Russia? Trying to earn his bread and butter. He had commenced the composition of *Die Meistersinger* and was very anxious to continue it. But one cannot live by writing musical "notes," which no one is willing to honor. His early operas were being sung everywhere, but in most cities the small honorarium ($40 to about $240) due at the first performance had long since been paid and used up; tantièmes he received in only a few cases, and in these they amounted to a mere pittance, while in the large cities his operas were systematically and purposely per-

learned the second act he had again forgotten the first." But what of that? Ander, being an ordinary uneducated singer, could not know much about the history of music; could not know that the notions as to what is possible in vocal music had often changed; could not know, for instance, that Mozart's *Don Juan* had been given up at Florence after thirty-six rehearsals as "impossible." But professional critics who pose as historians of music ought to know such things, and ought to encourage despondent artists, instead of hanging like mill-stones around the neck of musical progress, crying "impossible" at every new manifestation of creative genius. The fact that *Tristan and Isolde* was in 1890–1891 sung at thirteen German cities shows how "impossible" a work it is and what an acute judge of vocal music Dr. Hanslick was.

formed as poorly and as seldom as possible, thanks to the efforts of such influential enemies as Hülsen, Lachner, etc. He was forced to do something to make a living, and in view of the enthusiastic demonstrations at the special performance of *Lohengrin* it was natural to suppose that a few concerts in Vienna and other cities might benefit his exchequer and at the same time call attention to his later works. In January, 1863, while the *Tristan* rehearsals were still in progress, he therefore gave three concerts in Vienna, at which selections from *Rheingold, Walküre, Siegfried,* and the *Meistersinger* were played. Great enthusiasm was aroused by some of these selections, especially by Siegmund's Love Song, the Magic Fire Scene, the Ride of the Valkyries, and the university students made a special demonstration in favor of the "music of the future."

These concerts were subsequently repeated, under the composer's direction, at Prague, Pesth, Karlsruhe, Leipzig, and other German cities. Berlin was passed by; not entirely, however, for Wagner had a wish to see Intendant Hülsen, with a view, apparently, of discussing a possible first *Meistersinger* performance; but he was informed that Hülsen would not receive him! At Leipzig, his birthplace, he did give a concert, but had reason to regret it: the public simply left the house empty. Leipzig was still a Mendelssohn town.

Even Russia was included, as we have intimated, in this concert tour. Four concerts were given at St. Petersburg, one of which was entirely devoted to his own compositions. Here he found ardent champions in Seroff and other members of the young Russian school; and here, he exclaims (VIII. 310) "the miracle happened

that for the first time in my experience the newspapers received me as favorably as the public." What is more important still, these concerts at St. Petersburg (and at Moscow) were the only ones which brought the hard-working composer a pecuniary profit. It is worth while to reflect for a moment, and connect these last two facts. They explain clearly why Wagner could not earn an honest penny in Germany by giving concerts. The critics, with hardly any exceptions, persisted in declaring his music void of form and melody, while at the same time the public was demanding repetitions of this "formless" Nibelung music in the concert-halls. The public, I say; but it was a small public; the large, the paying public, took its cue from the newspapers and refused to risk its money on music which the critics and feuilletonists described as "formless and void of melody." It fills one's heart with bitterness to think that if it had not been for these "critical" dunces, Wagner might have been able to devote all his time to composition, in which case operatic literature would have been enriched by several more masterworks like *Tristan* and *Die Meistersinger*. These critics could not kill Wagner's music, but they showed that they were able to retard musical progress, poison the life of a genius, and deprive the world of several immortal compositions.

Nor is this all. Insult was added to injury. When Wagner began giving selections from his later operas in concert-halls, the critics pounced on him for his "inconsistency." "Here is a man," they exclaimed, "who has proved, in elaborate theoretic treatises, that his dramatic music can be justly appreciated only in its proper place in the theatre, in connection with action, words,

and scenery; yet now he goes about the country playing fragments from his music-dramas." It is impossible to conceive anything more spiteful and cruel than this attitude of the press, maintained persistently for many years, against a poor artist driven against his own will and conviction to give these concerts for the purpose of earning his living, and of bringing to public notice his new operas which the managers refused to perform.

In the biography of the eminent Viennese conductor, Johann Herbeck, by his son, there is printed, among other interesting letters from Wagner, one which illustrates how unwilling he was, at first, to produce even independent orchestral portions of his music-dramas in the concert-hall. Herbeck had written for permission to give the *Tristan* prelude at a concert. Wagner's reply (dated Paris, Oct. 12, 1859) was: "The score of *Tristan* will shortly appear in print. A preliminary performance of the orchestral prelude was given even at Leipzig *against* my will: as soon as you make the acquaintance of this piece, you will certainly understand why I cannot consider it suited for concert performance." But Herbeck was not to be put off. He called attention to the fact that the performances of the prelude already given at Prague under Bülow's direction and at Leipzig under Liszt's had been attended by very great success, and adds: —

"Now, since a performance of this piece has taken place two months ago against your will, could you, honored Sir, perhaps permit Vienna to form the third in the robber trio, which exploits another's property against the rightful owner's will?"[1]

[1] Here we see how the importunity of friends combined with pecuniary and artistic necessity in forcing him to produce selections from his

COMPOSITION OF THE MEISTERSINGER

Amid the distractions and annoyances of the *Tristan* rehearsals and the concert tours, Wagner found time occasionally to devote a few days to his new operatic project, *Die Meistersinger*. It will be remembered that he conceived and sketched the plot of this opera at a Bohemian summer resort, in the happy mood which followed the completion of *Tannhäuser*. About the same time the *Lohengrin* subject had forced itself on his mind, and caused him to give up, or rather to postpone, the comic-opera plan. Sixteen years later it began to ferment again in his brain. It is probable that the difficulties he experienced with *Tristan* recalled to his memory the advice of Dresden friends that a comic opera would appeal to the public more forcibly than a tragedy. Strange to say, it was after the depressing events following the *Tannhäuser* catastrophe that the humorous poem of this opera was written, at Paris, to which he had

music-dramas in the concert-hall. "Half a loaf is better than no bread," one might say; but the public was and is very far from looking at Wagner selections in the concert-hall as "half a loaf." On the contrary, it prefers them even to the "whole loafs" of most other composers, baked expressly for concert consumption. This is true especially of countries where there are few or no opportunities to hear Wagner's dramas on the stage. In London the Hans Richter concerts have for years been the most popular and successful of all orchestral entertainments; and the programmes, as everybody knows, are made up almost entirely of Wagner and Beethoven, with a decided preponderance of Wagner. A glance at Mr. G. H. Wilson's *Musical Year Book of the United States* for the last few years, shows that in America Wagner has more performances at orchestral concerts than any other composer; and although I have no definite French statistics, I have a suspicion that the same statement might be made regarding concerts in Paris.

returned for the winter, not with any more operatic projects, but simply because he had chosen it to be his home for some time longer. On the way to Paris he had made a short stop at Mayence, to confer with Schott, who was publishing the Nibelung scores. In February, 1862, he went to Mayence again and took up his residence in Biebrich, on the other side of the Rhine: "I am staying here because I want to superintend the printing of my *Meistersinger*," he wrote to Praeger from this place. In March he received permission to return to Saxony if he chose, so that his amnesty was now complete. Not long afterwards the *Meistersinger* poem appeared in print, though in a version differing somewhat in details from its present form. In July he had the pleasure of entertaining as his guests for a few days the great tenor Schnorr and his wife, besides Bülow. Concerning Schnorr, who was to win, three years later, Wagner's admiration as Tristan, he writes to Praeger: —

"He was going to sing *Lohengrin* at Karlsruhe. I did not want him or anybody to know I should be present, so I went secretly, for I feared a disappointment; he is fat, and picture a corpulent Knight of the Swan! I had not heard him before. I went, and he sang marvellously. He was inspired, and I was enchanted; he realized my ideal."

In the autumn of the same year he also made up his mind to publish his Nibelung poems. A few copies for private distribution had been printed by him shortly after their completion. At that time he objected to having them made public, because he did not wish them to be judged as mere literary products, apart from the music which conditioned their form; but for the same reason that he was at this time giving fragments of the

score at concerts, he now determined to issue the poem; namely, because it would help to call attention to his Tetralogy, and thus carry on an agitation which might ultimately help him to realize the execution of his gigantic enterprise. The poem is accompanied by two short but extremely interesting autobiographic and critical sketches — a Preface and an Epilogue giving an account of the circumstances attending the conception, execution, and further adventures of the Nibelung poems up to the time of their appearance in print. The biographic details herein contained have been given in preceding pages, in their proper places; it only remains for us to note here that the Preface contains a concise and graphic description of a projected Nibelung Festival, such as was realized in Bayreuth fourteen years later, with all the essential details — a special theatre, with amphitheatric auditorium; an invisible orchestra; afternoon performances, with long intermissions for lunch and recreation; leading singers devoted solely to the task of interpreting a new national German style of musico-dramatic art, etc. But for such a stage festival a considerable sum would be needed. How could these funds be provided? By means of a subscription among wealthy amateurs? He could see little chance in this direction, and the only hope lay in the possibility that some German sovereign might decide to devote to this new national art some of the money that was so freely squandered on the flimsy operatic performances of the period. *Wird dieser Fürst sich finden?* Will this monarch be found?

Those were the weightiest words Richard Wagner ever wrote; they were destined to turn the wheel of fortune, and change the current of his whole life. But when he

wrote them he had little faith that they would lead to any results: —

"I have *no* hope of surviving the performance of my festival dramas; indeed, I can hardly hope to find time and the mood for completing the composition. Accordingly I am now really offering my poem as a purely dramatic work, a literary poem, to the book-reading public. To have it attract the notice of even this public will not be easy, since it has no real market. The literary man puts away the 'opera-text' as concerning the musician only; the musician will put it away because he cannot conceive how any one can set such a poem to music. The public proper, which so readily decided in my favor, asks for the 'Act.' That, alas, is not in my power."

About this time he also wrote an essay on *The Vienna Court Opera-House*, with many practical suggestions which he hoped might be heeded in the organization of the new opera-house then in course of erection. This house he probably had in mind, too, when he made an offer to write a new opera especially for Vienna; to which offer, as he relates (VI. 383), the

"well-considered answer was returned in writing, that for the present, it was thought the name 'Wagner' had had sufficient attention, and that it was considered well to give another composer an opportunity. This other composer was *Jacques Offenbach*, who actually was asked about this time to write a new opera especially for Vienna."

A few more concerts were undertaken, in Vienna and elsewhere, at one of which Tausig appeared. But the applause continued to be more abundant than the receipts. A serenade given him by the Männergesangverein, the leading Viennese choral society, in honor of his *fiftieth birthday*, formed a pleasant episode, but could

not improve his material position. Debts were again overwhelming him; he found he had to give up his residence at Penzing near Vienna. But where should he go? Would it not be better to give up the hopeless struggle, throw his artistic work aside forever, and try to earn his living some other and better way? He seriously contemplated accompanying an English family to India as a tutor. But the thought of his unfinished score déterred him. After completing *Die Meistersinger*, however, he determined to go to St. Petersburg, where he had been so well received, and make that his home for the remainder of his life; and if that should fail to meet his expectations, he intended to join his relatives in Germany and lead a quiet retired life.

SOME INSTANTANEOUS PHOTOGRAPHS

But the *Meistersinger* must first be completed. Where? Switzerland, where his last four scores had been written, naturally suggested itself as the best place, especially since the summer was coming on. But his Zürich home was no more; his wife had left him. In this emergency it occurred to him to seek refuge for a while under the always hospitable roof of his Mariafeld friends, the Willes. He wrote a letter describing his situation, and asking if a workroom could be placed at his disposal, either in the main building or the outhouse: "some furniture is still in my possession, and could be used. For the rest, I ask only board and service. In every other way I shall try to avoid being a burden."

The letter was followed by the writer so rapidly that Frau Wille had hardly found time to arrange the guest-

chamber for him. Herr Wille was absent on an Oriental journey, while his wife had remained, enjoying the company of her sons, who were home from school. It was a lucky accident that she had not accompanied her husband; lucky for Wagner, and lucky for those interested in the story of his life; for during the six weeks preceding the day when King Ludwig sent out a messenger to find Wagner, the latter was thus living in the house of an intellectual woman, a novelist, who fully realized his greatness, and not only could give him the sympathy and home life he needed, but was wise enough to jot down some of his remarks and doings on slips of paper, out of which, in 1886, she constructed part of the valuable *Rundschau* articles to which reference has been made repeatedly in preceding pages. To Frau Wille we thus owe a number of most interesting instantaneous photographs of the period when part of the *Meistersinger* score was written, besides a number of invaluable letters from Wagner regarding his first meetings with the King, which for the first time enable the biographer to give details about this interesting period.

Frau Wille took care that her distinguished guest should have everything arranged to suit his wishes: —

"He wanted to work, to be undisturbed, and I had even given him servants for his own use. Many visitors from Zürich, brought here by curiosity or sympathy, when the news spread that the famous man was at Mariafeld, were turned away by me; Wagner was not in a mood to submit to such interruptions. He wrote and received many letters; he begged me to pay no attention to him, to let him eat alone in his room, if that did not too much disturb my domestic arrangements. It was a pleasure to me to humor my friend as far as possible. To Zürich he had no desire to go; his work did not seem to agree with him, but he took many solitary

walks. I can still see him walking up and down our garden terrace, in his brown velvet gown, with the black biretta as headdress, as if he were one of the patricians painted by Albrecht Dürer."

He was in the kind of a mood, Frau Wille remarks, that will lead a son to confide to his mother. Her efforts to console him with the reflection that it is the lot of great men to suffer from annoyances, great and small, were received with a good-natured smile. One day he remarked to her: "My friend, you do not know the extent of my sufferings, the depth of the misery that lies before me." There were hours when the bitterest invective against his fate came from his lips; but there were also days when he indulged in pleasant reminiscences of his younger days: —

"Thus the sun shone on many a fine day when Wagner felt disposed to come to my family room. All who were near him know how warmhearted and amiable he could be. The sons by the side of their mother received his kindest attention. . . . He knew how to tease and how to tell stories delightfully. He had been pleased with Vienna; he called it the only musical German city. His house in Penzing had been neatly furnished, to suit his taste. He told of the two servants, man and wife, who had taken good care of him, also of the large dog, the splendid faithful animal, which he missed here. But the happy mood did not last. Letters came which put an end to his good humor. He retired to the solitude of his room, and when he saw me alone, his heart would overflow in words that rarely took a hopeful view of the future."

One evening, as he was sitting by the window gazing at the setting sun, Frau Wille tried to console him by painting to his fancy pictures of a happy future which seemed certain to come. Wagner replied: —

"How can you talk of a future, when my manuscripts are locked up in my desk! Who is to bring out the art-work which only *I*

with the co-operation of propitious deities can produce, so that all the world may see how it is, how the master saw and wanted his work?"

In great agitation he walked up and down the room. Suddenly he stood still and said: —

"I am differently organized from others, have sensitive nerves, must have beauty, splendor, and light! I cannot be content with the miserable position of an organist, like our Master Bach. Is it really such an outrageous demand if I claim a right to the little bit of luxury which I like — I, who am preparing enjoyment for the world and for thousands!"

As he said this, his head was raised defiantly: then he sank again into the armchair, gazing at the setting sun.

He related one morning a dream that had harassed him all night: Amid lightning and storm he had roamed all night over the heath; he himself was King Lear. The fool sang mocking tunes, the poor beggar Edgar whined that he was cold. Lear with his royal soul flung his curse into the night and storm, and felt great and wretched but not humiliated. "What say you, my friend, to such an experience where a man feels himself identified with the fancies of his dreams?"

Of his music-drama he spoke seldom; but one day he hinted at the autobiographic aspect of *Die Meistersinger*, and added: "The world will be astounded when it hears the tones and chords which I sound in honor of the Mastersinger! — Energy and seriousness are my attributes — Thoroughly *German* is *my* Hans Sachs, as much so as the amiable burgher who sang the noble song of the Wittenberg nightingale in honor of your Luther. — My Mastersinger you shall hold in honor!" When Frau Wille told him of the deep impression once made on

her by Bach's Passion, he suddenly exclaimed: "You poor woman, why have I not played for you all this time? This very day you shall hear what will please you"; and he played the love-duo from *Tristan*. From that day he occasionally came to her parlor and played on the grand, which he liked better than the ordinary piano in his room. Thus it happened that his hostess was privileged to be the first mortal to hear some of the sublime strains of *Die Meistersinger*: —

"One morning majestic chords came to me in my sitting-room from the salon. I opened the door softly, and held my breath, to hear what came, as it were, directly from the master's first cast. Nothing could have induced me to interrupt him. It was as if I felt directly the power of a great artist's mastery over a refractory material. What was it that so mightily agitated my fancy and spirit? First darkness — suddenly a ray of light — then like a flash of lightning, joy illumines the soul. — Silently as I had come I went. I never told Wagner of the impression made on me by what I had heard. A few days later he begged me to follow him to his room. He showed me manuscripts lying in portfolios, and devoted the whole evening to me. I admired the handwriting, the elegant copies, — and most of all the sketches made with extremely small notes, — there they lay like flowers of beauty in the bud. I looked at the man who had power to create such riches, with mixed feeling of awe and admiration."

SEPARATION FROM MINNA

The reader has probably wondered repeatedly why, in the narrative of the last few years' events in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland, no mention has been made of Minna. The reason is a simple one: she had left the composer, and, although not divorced, the two were separated for life. Their last months together were

passed in Paris in 1861. Shortly before leaving for Paris, Wagner wrote to Liszt: —

"For the present I spend all the good humor I can command on my wife. I flatter her and take care of her as if she were a bride in her honeymoon. My reward is that I see her thrive, her bad illness is visibly getting better. She is recovering, and will, I hope, become a little rational in her old age."

In Paris she had once more to share all the wretchedness and the perpetual disappointments which made up his life, and less than ever could she comprehend why he should not be "practical" and pay such heed to the "gallery" as made success so easy for others though they had but a tithe of his ability. An intimate friend and frequent visitor, the "Idealistin" previously referred to, remarks: —

"Frau Wagner wished to mediate by demanding of the genius concessions to the world which he could not, must not, make. From this complete inability to understand the nature of genius and its relations to the world, there resulted almost daily trouble and torment in their intercourse, increased by the fact that the absence of children deprived them of the last element of reconciliation. Nevertheless, Frau Wagner was a good woman, and in the eyes of the world decidedly the better half and the chief sufferer. I judged otherwise, and felt the deepest pity with Wagner, for whom love should have built the bridge by which he might have reached others, whereas now it was only making the bitter cup of his life bitterer. I was on good terms with Frau Wagner, who often poured her complaints into my ears, and I tried to console her, but of course in vain."

She adds that she often spoke to Madame Ollivier (a daughter of Liszt) about this matter, and the two "agreed that never perhaps were two less compatible persons united in marriage."

When Wagner was living at Penzing, waiting for *Tristan* to be produced at Vienna, his wife had gone back to Dresden, where she spent the rest of her life with members of her family. Yet the break had apparently not been irreparable; for on February, 1863, Wagner writes from St. Petersburg to Praeger: "I would Minna were here with me; we might, in the excitement that now moves fast around me, grow again the quiescent pair of yore. The whole thing is annoying. I am not in good spirits; I move about freely, and see a number of people, but my misery is bitter." Nor had Minna apparently given him up entirely, for she opened a correspondence with Praeger; whereupon her husband again writes: —

"And so she has written to you? Whose fault was it? How could she have expected I was to be shackled and fettered as any ordinary cold common mortal? My inspirations carried me into a sphere she could not follow, and then the exuberance of my heated enthusiasm was met by a cold douche. But still there was no reason for the extreme step; everything might have been arranged between us, and it would have been better had it been so. Now there is a dark void, and my misery is deep."

This note is dated April, 1864, Mariafeld, and this brings us back to Frau Wille. She relates first an incident that happened some years before when, after reading the preface to *Opera and Drama*, Wagner had commented on the imprudence of marrying when young and poor. Minna had retorted: "Well, I have plenty of letters that show which of us wanted to marry. *It was not I.*" (Perhaps if she had loved her husband it would have been easier for her to understand him.) Wagner had answered: "Poor woman, who was called

upon to get along with a monster of a genius." And now, in the spring of 1864, when all was lost, he exclaimed to Frau Wille: —

"Between me and my wife all might have turned out well! I had simply spoiled her dreadfully, and yielded to her in everything. She did not *feel* that I am a man who cannot live with wings tied down. What did *she* know of the divine right of passion, which I announce in the flame-death of the Valkyrie, who has fallen from the grace of the gods? With the death-sacrifice of love the Götterdämmerung [dusk of the gods] sets in."

The world is apt to side with the woman in a case like this, especially if her partner is of the *irritabile genus*, a man of genius. No doubt Minna had much to endure, and deserves all our pity; but that her husband is not alone to blame in this matter, is shown by the extremely happy and contented life he led with his second wife, Cosima, the daughter of Liszt, who *did* love and understand him. Her he married in 1870. Minna died at Dresden in 1866, of heart disease. One of her last acts was the writing of a letter in which she made a public denial of the charges trumped up against her husband by unscrupulous enemies, that, while revelling in luxury, he had allowed her to starve. As a matter of fact, he continued to support her, as he had supported her parents, even in times of extreme poverty. He never, after their separation, countenanced disparaging allusions to her, and his letters of this period, as well as the testimony of friends, show that for a long time the bitterness of the separation helped to poison his happiness, and that he greatly missed his partner of twenty-seven years. To Praeger he wrote in June, 1864, of his "torturing feeling of isolation": —

"The commonest domestic details must now be done by me; the purchasing of kitchen utensils and such kindred matters am I driven to. Ah! poor Beethoven! now is it forcibly brought home to me what his discomforts were with his washing-book and engaging of housekeepers, etc., etc. I who have praised woman more than Frauenlob, have not one for my companion. The truth is, I have spoiled Minna; too much did I indulge her, too much did I yield to her; but it were better not to talk upon a subject which never ceases to vex me."

KING AND COMPOSER

Frau Wille relates that one day (in the latter part of April) Wagner took a walk with her and her husband, who had just come back from the Orient. On their return a package of letters was placed in the composer's hands. After a glance at them he declared that he would depart on the following day. He kept his word, but before leaving he said he would soon return, and bring along Bülow and his wife to spend the summer with them. To Wille he remarked that he was going to seek a health resort in order to invigorate his constitution, and then to visit the theatres of Stuttgart, Karlsruhe, and Hanover to make arrangements for producing some of his operas. Such were indeed his intentions, as the sequel showed; but his departure was doubtless hastened by the news he had received in one of those letters that his Viennese creditors were on his tracks, and that he was, in fact, in danger of being arrested and imprisoned for debt. He had lived unwisely and extravagantly at Vienna. He had a passion for refined luxury, and, like most musicians and other artists, could not resist the temptation, when he had a little money, to squander it

recklessly. Rumor said that he had earned $20,000 with his concerts, and spent 6000 francs alone on a silk-embroidered couch! This was of course absurd, for his concerts had been unprofitable, excepting the five given in Russia, and those could not by any possibility have netted such a sum — or a quarter of it. He had, however, been so foolish as to borrow a large sum that was to be repaid from the profits of a second Russian tour — which was subsequently given up. Hence the new debts, added to the old ones. It had been his fate, as the reader knows, to fail (except in Russia) in all those enterprises from which he had hoped pecuniary benefit, and which *to-day* are so immensely profitable. Debts at Dresden for publishing his operas; debts in Paris for bringing out *Tannhäuser;* debts in Vienna for attempting *Tristan* and giving concerts; debts for his daily expenses, his necessary travels, and the support of his wife. As he says in a letter of this period to Frau von Muchanow:[1] "The most extraordinary, almost demoniac bad luck frustrated all my efforts; I resolved to retire for all time to a quiet refuge and give up my artistic labors forever." His project of going to live in Russia had also come to naught. Not long before he left Mariafeld he had received a letter from Russia, showing that the offers of assistance which had been made by the Princess Helène would not bear the test of trial. Add to this that *Tristan* had been found "impossible" wherever it had been attempted, and *Die Meistersinger*, the comic opera in which he was about to meet the operatic managers and the public half-way, had been sneeringly refused in advance wherever he had offered

[1] Tappert, p. 91.

it — and we see why even his iron will was about to break.

He went to Stuttgart, where he had a good friend in Conductor Eckert of the Opera; through his influence he hoped to win the good-will of the Intendant, Baron Gall. Cannstadt, near Stuttgart, was recommended to him for his health. His operatic hopes were annihilated when he heard a performance, which inspired him "with deadly disgust." Yet he decided to remain here some time, and directed Frau Wille to send letters in care of Eckert. This was on May 2. On May 4 he writes again, from Munich, in great exuberance of joy: —

"I would be the most ungrateful of men if I did not immediately inform you of my boundless good luck. You know that the King of Bavaria sent a messenger to find me. To-day I was brought before him. He is, alas, so beautiful and intellectual, so sympathetic and delightful, that I am afraid his life must fade away in this common world like a dream. He loves me with the depth and ardor of first love; he knows everything about myself, and understands me like my own soul. He wants me to be with him always, to work, to rest, to produce my works; he will give me everything I need; I am to finish my Nibelungen, and he will have them performed as I wish. I am to be my own unrestricted master, not Kapellmeister — nothing but myself and his friend. All troubles are to be taken from me; I shall have whatever I need, if only I stay with him.

"What do you say to this? what do you say? Is it not unheard of? Can this be anything but a dream?"

But it was not a dream. The young King of Bavaria had read that preface to the Nibelung poems; he had read the despairing call of the composer: "Will this Prince be found?" and had said to himself, "I will be that Prince." The story is best told in Wagner's own words, in a letter to Frau Wille: —

"In the year when my *Tannhäuser* was first performed (the work with which I entered on my new thorny path), in the month of August, when I was filled with such an exuberance of creative impulse that I sketched *Lohengrin* and *Die Meistersinger* at the same time, a mother gave birth to my guardian angel. At the time when I was finishing my *Tristan* at Lucerne, and was making unspeakable efforts to secure permission to live on German territory (Baden), and finally, in despair, turned to Paris, there to engage in undertakings against which my spirit revolted — at that time the youth of fifteen first heard a performance of my *Lohengrin*, which moved him so deeply that from that date he educated himself by the study of my works and writings in such a manner that he now frankly confesses to his surroundings, as well as to me, that I was really his sole educator and teacher. He followed up my career and my troubles, my disagreeable Parisian experiences, my misfortunes in Germany, and now his sole wish is to have the power to prove his supreme love for me. The only sore trouble of the youth was to comprehend how to secure from his obtuse surroundings this necessary sympathy for me. Early in March, of this year, — I remember the day, — I became convinced that any attempt to improve my situation must fail; openly and defenceless I confronted all the abominable indignities inflicted on me, when, quite unexpectedly, the King of Bavaria died, and my compassionate guardian angel — contrary to all fate — mounted the throne. Four weeks later, his first care was to send for me. While I was, with your compassionate assistance, draining the cup of misery to the dregs, his messenger was already searching for me at my empty house in Penzing; he had to bring the loving King a lead-pencil, a pen, belonging to me. How and when he found me you know already."

The messenger despatched by the King to find Wagner was Adjutant Sauer. The song-composer Baron Hornstein met him on a boat on Lake Constance and found him looking tired and disappointed. On being questioned, he said that King Ludwig had suddenly become a great Wagner enthusiast, and had sent him out to find

him and bring him to Munich. He had spent a week hunting for him in Vienna and elsewhere, and was now on his way to his Swiss haunts in the hope of finding him there. "Why," said Hornstein, "I know where he is; he is at Stuttgart hiding from his creditors." So Sauer went to Stuttgart, where he found his man.[1]

The King's love for Wagner was one of those romantic passions which, among the Greeks, great statesmen, artists, and philosophers used to inspire in the mind of gifted youths — a friendship with all the symptoms of romantic love.[2] It was like love at first sight. After a brief visit to Vienna, where his relations to King Ludwig made it easy for him to pacify his creditors for the moment, he took up his residence in a villa on the beautiful Lake Starnberg, not far from Munich, which his royal friend had placed at his disposal. It was only ten minutes from Schloss Berg, the lake-castle of the King, who sent his carriage for his new friend two or three times every day.

"I fly to him as to a beloved one," Wagner writes. "It is an enchanting intimacy. Never before have I seen such unrestrained eagerness to learn, such comprehension, ardor, and enthusiasm, and then his loving care for me, the chaste cordiality which is expressed in every mien when he assures me of his happiness in possessing me; thus we often sit for hours, lost in contemplation of each other."

[1] These details I have from the Munich tenor Herr Vogl, who said he once told the story to Wagner, who confirmed it. Vogl added that Wagner's affairs had come to such a pass that he had decided to purchase a pistol to end his life, when he was saved by the timely arrival of the King's messenger. Apparently Baron Pfistenmeister was also despatched to find Wagner. One of these messengers accompanied him to Munich.

[2] For a discussion of this kind of passionate friendship, common among the Greeks, and not rare to-day, see the chapter on "Greek Love" in my *Romantic Love and Personal Beauty*.

One of the King's first acts was to sit specially for a portrait, which he presented to his friend. There was nothing, Wagner felt, that the King would refuse, if he asked for it, and he congratulated himself that the young Ludwig had come under an influence which could not but benefit him in turn.

In September he writes again to Frau Wille: —

"Now I have a young King who really loves me ecstatically; you cannot conceive what that means. I remember a dream which I had as a youth: I dreamed that Shakespeare was living, and that I saw him and spoke to him, actually and in person. I have never forgotten the impression which this made on me, and which aroused the desire in me to see Beethoven (who, too, was no longer among the living). Somewhat similar must be the feelings of this charming young man in having me. He tells me he can hardly believe that I am really his! His letters to me no one can read without astonishment and delight. Liszt remarked that his receptivity, as revealed in them, was on the same lofty plane as my productivity. Believe me, it is a miracle." "Through him," he exclaims in another letter, "the male sex has completely rehabilitated itself in my eyes."

Thus the summer of 1864 was agreeably spent at Lake Starnberg. Here he composed his jubilant *Huldigungsmarsch*, as an expression of homage and gratitude to his royal benefactor; and here he wrote, at the King's wish, his essay on *State and Religion*, in which he discusses the functions of kings, patriotism, illusions, the press, faith, dogma, and other topics, in a not particularly lucid or interesting manner. He would have made a better use of his time by writing another piece like the *Huldigungsmarsch*, of which the song-composer Jensen has said that "tender and full of devotion, it looks ever inward, while the *Kaisermarsch* presses with imposing

force ever outward, like the magnetic mountain which draws everything in its range to itself." The somewhat brassy character of this march is accounted for by the fact that it was originally intended as a piece for the military band.

PREPARING THE SOIL

In the autumn king and composer returned to Munich, and a detached residence in the most artistic part of the city, near the Propylea, was placed at Wagner's disposal. The first thing to do was to prepare the soil for the coming great artistic events. The composer needed lieutenants, and these he found in Bülow, Cornelius, and others, who were summoned to his assistance. The presence of Bülow also ensured the companionship of his wife Cosima, daughter of Liszt, whom Wagner had first met three years previously in Paris. She arrived in June, with her two children and servant, in advance of her husband, who was to follow soon. This helped to mitigate the melancholy which he had felt in his lonely household ever since his wife had gone to Dresden, in spite of all the loving attentions of the King.

"Poor Bülow," he writes to Frau Wille, "arrived early in July in a most depressed state of health, with overworked and shattered nerves; he found here persistent bad, cold weather which made his sojourn disagree with him, and brought on one relapse after another. Add to this a tragic marriage; a young woman of extraordinary, quite unprecedented endowment, Liszt's wonderful image, but of superior intellect. . . . The most important thing was to make Bülow give up his insanely exhausting art-activity and provide a nobler field for him. It was easy to induce the King — for whom also it was a matter of consequence — to appoint Bülow as court pianist. I now hope to have the Bülows here with me soon for good."

have been brought in a place where people are used to such primitive domestic arrangements as was the case in Munich at that time; and that Wagner's furnishings were no more luxurious than those of any well-to-do merchant on the Rhine.[1]

Another charge brought against him was that he was inaccessible, unsocial. So he was, no doubt. He suffered so much from unbidden visitors, who seemed to look on him as one of the local curiosities whom one could go and see like a giraffe or an elephant, that he finally became very shy of admitting callers. Those who came to be thus repulsed, (and among whom there were probably some who had a claim to his attention,) took revenge by writing him up as an arrogant individual. His love of solitude, which he shared with all men of genius, had been so aggravated by his many years of enforced isolation in Switzerland, that he did not feel tempted to avail himself as much of artistic fellowship in Munich as he would have done had he been more "diplomatic." His principal desire, as always, was to be left in peace and alone with his artwork; but this desire was not to be gratified, even though the munificence of the King had at last taken from his shoulders the petty cares of gaining a livelihood, which had so often interrupted his composition.

The main source of trouble was this munificence of the King and the partiality which inspired it. Wagner was believed to have as great an influence on the King in political as in art matters. This was not the case; for, as he once remarked to Wille, "the King looked at the ceiling and began to whistle whenever he talked to him

[1] *Neues Skizzenbuch*, p. 146.

about politics." How universal this belief nevertheless was is indicated in this incident related in a letter to Frau Wille, the reference being to Lassalle: —

"The unhappy man came to me (through Bülow's introduction) just fourteen days before his death, to beg me to intercede with the King of Bavaria against his ambassador in Switzerland (Dönniges). (For I am considered simply an omnipotent favorite; the other day the relatives of a female poisoner implored my protection!) What do you say to that? I had never before met Lassalle; on this occasion I disliked him heartily. It was a love affair, prompted purely by vanity and false pathos. I recognized in him the type of our prominent men of the future, which I must call the Germanic-Jewish."

Glasenapp relates that politicians endeavored to gain influence on the young King through Wagner; and when the latter refused to be made a tool for their designs they turned against him and plotted his ruin.

In the letter to Frau Wille following the one just quoted from, Wagner accuses himself of insincerity and admits that his general influence on the King is greater than he had confessed. And herein lies his chief care and trouble. He cannot abandon the King to his surroundings without fearing the worst for him. To cite his own words: —

"The deepest anguish overwhelms me, and I ask my demon: 'Why this cup to me?' Why must I, who seek only quiet and time for work, be involved in a responsibility which places the salvation of a divinely endowed young man, perhaps the welfare of a whole country, in my hands? How can I here save my heart? How still remain an artist? *He has not a man such as he needs!* — This, this is my real perplexity. The superficial play of intrigues is of no consequence; it is intended merely to make me forget myself and commit an indiscretion. But what energy —

which would forever deprive me of my repose — would I not need to tear away my young friend forever from his surroundings! He clings to me with touching fidelity, and isolates himself against all at present. What do you say to my fate? — My longing for the last rest is inexpressible; my heart can no longer endure these emotions."

Four days before these words were written, the *Allgemeine Zeitung* (Feb. 22, 1865) had contained an open letter of three columns in which Wagner replied to the slanders and charges brought against him by the newspapers. It is an eloquent document, so superb in its dignified pathos, so crushing in its simple assertion of the truth, that I regret that considerations of space prevent me from translating the whole of it in this place. It begins with these words: —

"Having been summoned to Munich by the munificence of His Majesty, the King of Bavaria, in order to be enabled, after hard struggles and toils, to harvest the fruits of a laborious artist-life in the undisturbed enjoyment of repose and opportunity to work, it has been my fate, after living in great seclusion and awaiting only my noble patron's orders, to be suddenly disturbed in my asylum by attacks on my personality, by a storm of public accusations such as ordinarily get into the papers only from the law-courts and even from there only with certain traditional considerations.

"I have been in London and Paris when my art works and tendencies were unmercifully ridiculed by the newspapers, my works dragged into the dust and hissed in the theatre; but that my person, my private character, my civic qualities and domestic habits should be exposed to public abuse in the most dishonorable manner, — that is an experience which was reserved for me till I came to a place where my works are appreciated, my aims and tendencies acknowledged to possess manly seriousness and noble significance."

Concerning the hullabaloo raised over the salary given to him by the King he says, after explaining the

plan of the Nibelung Tetralogy, as approved by His Majesty: —

"For this order [to complete the Tetralogy], the acceptance of which compelled me to give up for several years all work for which I could hope to receive immediate recompense from the German theatres, His Majesty granted me, under a regular contract, emoluments which did not exceed what Bavarian Kings had previously granted in ordering works of art or science. Having a right, therefore, to regard myself, not as a favorite, but as an artist adequately paid for his work, I believe that I am not called upon to give an account of my expenditures to any one, unless it be that I must apologize for having secured for my work the same compensation which painters, architects, savants, etc., have often obtained. How highly I nevertheless appreciate the good luck of having unexpectedly found just here the magnanimous patron who knew how to appreciate the value of my boldest artistic plan, may be seen from this that I forthwith asked the King's consent to my naturalization as a Bavarian citizen, and gave the orders necessary therefor. Although German art cannot be Bavarian, but simply German, Munich is nevertheless the capital of this German art; to feel myself here, under the protection of a sovereign who inspires me, perfectly at home and one of the people, was a true and sincere necessity to me who had so long been a homeless wanderer in many lands."

In regard to the charges of his isolation he briefly adds: —

"Having always been accustomed to great retirement from public life, being usually in poor health, and suffering from the after-effects of years of privation, I was obliged during the first part of my sojourn here to postpone to a later period my cordial desire to enlarge the circle of my personal friends and thereby completely realize my naturalization in Bavaria."

Concerning the charge that he had ordered his own portrait painted by his friend Pecht and then sent a bill

of a thousand florins therefor to the royal exchequer, he says: "I assure my accuser that . . . there is not *one* true word in this matter, as the court-officials in question will attest to him on application, whereas the real occurrence is capable of no other but an extremely honorable interpretation."

Such were some of the indictments brought against Wagner. His reply acted like a thunderbolt; the slanderers kept in hiding for a while, and the composer was able to proceed with his labors, which were soon to culminate in an event which, as he had predicted, marked an epoch in the history of dramatic music.

TRISTAN AND ISOLDE IN MUNICH

THE SECOND BAYREUTH

On page 638 of the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* for 1864 may be found a letter from Munich in which these lines occur: "Local musical affairs will soon undergo a change unsuspected a short time ago. In place of Lachner's classical and exclusive policy we shall have all the Future. Richard Wagner goes in and out of the royal apartments unannounced." It was a change, indeed, that was impending in Munich; a change which was to convert the Bavarian capital from a pool of stagnation into the whirlpool of modern music. In other words, Munich became, for eleven years, the "Bayreuth" of musicians, taking the place of what I have called the first Bayreuth, Weimar, which fell from its glory when Liszt abandoned it to the enemy. It was an odd chance, too, that conferred this honor on Munich; for of the numerous German capitals it was almost the last to take up the Wagner cult. A correspondent of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* writes in 1852 that the concert season of that winter was opened with the *Tannhäuser* overture, the first piece of Wagner's heard in that city up to date! Fancy! It took the *Tannhäuser* overture seven years to reach Munich from Dresden! For this delay a fifth-rate composer, Franz Lachner, who hap-

pened to be General-Musik-Director, was chiefly responsible. Lachner was very slow and cautious, even for a Bavarian General-Musik-Director; after the *Tannhäuser* overture had been heard, the opera itself was kept in quarantine four years longer. When it was given, Liszt heard his interpretation of it and found it very defective; consequently the reception was a cold one; nor was *Lohengrin* more warmly received two years later (1858). As for the *Flying Dutchman*, we know that it had been refused at Munich almost a quarter of a century before the date at which we have now arrived, as "unsuitable for the German stage."

It was with this opera that Wagner took up his practical duties in repayment of the King's favors, in the autumn of 1864. It was produced under his own direction, on Dec. 4, and was cordially received. Shortly afterwards a Wagner concert was given, with the usual result — plenty of applause, but little money. In September of the same year the project of giving *Tristan* had already received the King's eager approval; but it had to be postponed, for various reasons. It was not till April, 1865, that matters had progressed so far that Schnorr and his wife could be summoned from Dresden to attend the rehearsals.

REHEARSALS AND PERFORMANCES

Twenty years had elapsed since Richard Wagner had been enabled personally to superintend the production of a new opera of his own, although such an event had been the consuming desire of every day of his unhappy life. He had in the interim completed four works, — *Lohengrin, Rheingold, Walküre, Tristan,* — entirely, and

two more — *Siegfried* and *Die Meistersinger* in part, — yet he had to wait until a king appeared on the scene to *compel* his obtuse contemporaries to pay attention to the claims of genius! On April 18, 1865, he wrote a public letter inviting his friends in all parts of Europe to come to Munich for the performance of his eight-year-old *Tristan*, now first permitted to see the light of the world. This letter was addressed to the editor of the Vienna *Botschafter*, "still the only editor of a large political newspaper, on whose support I can rely whenever I have a communication to address to the public."[1] After giving a sketch of the history of his opera, the writer pays his tribute to King Ludwig, and then announces that there are to be three performances of *Tristan*, under conditions which will make them a thing quite apart from ordinary operatic representations, their object being not to amuse and make money, but to solve a noble artistic problem. One of the royal theatres had been entirely placed at his disposal for the rehearsals, and here, with the assistance of Bülow, he was preparing the performance. To Bülow, who conducted all the performances, he pays a special tribute as to

"him who achieved the impossible in providing a playable pianoforte score of this work, as regards which no musician can yet comprehend how he was able to do it. With him at my side, a second Ego, who knows by heart every minute detail of this score, which to many still appears such a riddle, and who is familiar with my intentions in their most delicate *nuances*, I can," etc.[2]

[1] This letter is reprinted in the *Bayreuther Blätter*, 1890, 173–180.

[2] Bülow also arranged for the piano the Vorspiel of the *Meistersinger*, as well as the *Huldigungsmarsch*, the *Faust* overture, and Wagner's version of Gluck's *Iphigenia* overture. In a private letter of this period Wagner speaks of Bülow as the only living conductor in whom he had full confidence.

In this matter Munich presented a delightful contrast to Paris. In other respects Wagner had to congratulate himself that he had not risked *Tristan* in Paris, where his singers would have been utterly inadequate to their tasks. True, Niemann afterwards became a great Tristan, but at that time he would not even attempt the complete Paris version of the scene with Venus. Now Wagner had Schnorr, the greatest vocal artist he had ever heard, and to whose eulogy he devotes an article of seventeen pages which all those should read who wish to know what was his ideal of a dramatic singer. Schnorr's character was as great as his art. He detested the flimsy operatic works of the day on which he was condemned to waste his powers, and his one ambition was to satisfy his Master: "Never has the most bungling singer or player accepted so much detailed instruction from me as this vocal hero, whose art touched on supreme mastery." Only in regard to the third act Wagner never said a word to him, excepting on one point. From the beginning of the act, contrary to his usual habit at rehearsals, he sat on the stage with closed eyes; Schnorr at first interpreted this as apathy or dissatisfaction; but when, after the love-curse, he arose, bent over the singer on his couch and whispered that he had no opinion to express on his realized ideal, Schnorr's "dark eye flashed like the star of love; a scarcely audible sob — and never again did we speak another serious word about this act."

The performances were to be on May 15, 18, 22, but illness and other causes of delay intervened, and the date had to be repeatedly postponed, so that it actually happened that a parody, entitled *Tristanderl und Süssholde*, appeared "for the very first and often postponed

time" before the original drama; and among the friends of the composer who had hastened to Munich in response to his invitation (Pohl mentions Gaspérini, Kalliwoda, Eckert, Gall, Draeseke, Klindworth, Jensen, Köhler, Dr. Damrosch, Röckel, Lassen, and others) some were obliged to return before the event. Among those who were thus disappointed was the inspired song-composer, Adolf Jensen, who had transferred his former Schumann worship to Wagner. After the first postponement he decided to wait, and in a letter to Hansen[1] he gives us a pleasant glimpse of musical life in Munich: —

"We spent Tuesday afternoon at Wagner's, where the time passed in the most inconceivably delightful fashion. . . . Bülow played all sorts of things. Wagner sang us his Cobbler's song from *Die Meistersinger*, with ironical humor, and cut up all sorts of pranks. Mrs. von Bülow persuaded me to stay by all means, because the performance would be sure to take place next week. She begged me to visit them whenever I liked, since I could not but value the chance of being with Wagner. Wagner drew me to a chair beside him, and said: 'Now, look here. Can't you stay? Are you positively obliged to be back in Königsberg by a certain day?' This was all said in a charmingly playful fashion. I replied that I was not absolutely compelled, but that pecuniary necessities and other things would make it difficult for me to stay. . . . When we all met in the evening at the *Vier Jahreszeiten*, Wagner said in his delightful, enchanting way: 'Now, my children, you must all suppose yourselves to have been taken ill. We are founding a big hospital here,' and thereupon he introduced Dr. Gaspérini (who had attended him in Paris), saying to him, 'Now, doctor, you must give these gentlemen certificates of illness.'"

But when one postponement followed upon another, poor Jensen had to leave without hearing *Tristan*, which

[1] See *Allgemeine Musikzeitung*, 1888.

was not given till June 10. He had to get what solation he could from the account sent to him by principal artist, Schnorr: —

"The performance went off very well, and although my was not quite recovered, she did wonders, and carried every off. There were enthusiastic calls after every act, and afte last we had the pleasure to bring out Wagner in our midst t the applauding audience. . . . The word has gone out into a world with a mighty sound. No ear can henceforth close against this wondrous legend. *Tristan* is born again, and Hansblick (*sic*) has lost his wager. . . . Among those who s the whole time were Dräseke, Porges, Damrosch, Gaspérini, sig, Pohl, Taubert, Neswabda, Kalliwoda, Pruckner, Seydel,

Three more performances followed, on June 13 and July 1, all before crowded houses; where Schnorr reluctantly returned to Dresden.

STORY OF THE DRAMA

Act I. Isolde, daughter of the King of Ireland, engaged to Morold, her cousin. Morold went to C wall to collect the customary tribute, but was slai Tristan, nephew of King Marke of Cornwall. In of the expected tribute Tristan sent Morold's hea Isolde. But Tristan himself had been wounded in affray, and resolved to seek the assistance of Is who had learned from her mother the magic art of ing. He came under the assumed name of Tantris; Isolde recognized him as Tristan, for she discovere his sword a notch into which a piece of iron she extracted from Morold's head fitted exactly. She r her sword to avenge her lover's death; when sudd meeting Tristan's eyes, she became overpowered

strong emotion, and allowed him to depart without revealing her discovery. After his return to Cornwall, Tristan joins those who are urging King Marke to marry again. He induces the King to despatch him again to Ireland to sue for Isolde as his future queen.

These events, preceding the drama, are related in the exposition, with the author's usual dramatic skill. When the curtain rises, the prow of the vessel on which Tristan has brought Isolde to the coast of Cornwall is before the spectator. Isolde is an unwilling bride, for she secretly loves Tristan, and is furious because he, with seeming indifference, has wooed her for another, and, in obedience to the custom which forbids the suitor to see the bride on the journey, refuses to leave the helm and come and speak to her, even after her companion Brangäne has delivered her message to him. She expresses her passionate regrets that she has not inherited the ancestral art of commanding the waves, that she might invite their destruction together. All that her mother had been able to do for her was to give her a golden casket with magic vials, one of which contains a love potion potent to inflame the passions of any one and were he as old as King Marke. But there is another vial, carefully marked by Isolde, containing a death potion. This she commands Brangäne to pour into the golden cup, and then sends her once more to Tristan with the message that she will refuse to go ashore unless he comes first to obtain her pardon. Tristan obeys. In reply to her taunt that he slew her lover whereas she saved and spared *his* life when it was in her power, he sadly offers his sword and bids her, if Morold was so dear to her, to take her revenge now. As she replies, with bitter irony, which ill

conceals her love, the cries of the sailors indicate that the harbor is close at hand. No time is to be lost. She beckons to Brangäne to bring the death potion and offers it to Tristan, who comprehends the situation and puts the welcome cup to his willing lips — for he too is devoured by a secret passion, and prefers immediate death to a life of hopeless love-longing. With the words "Treason here too!" Isolde snatches the half-emptied cup from his lips and drinks what is left. But Brangäne had secretly substituted the love potion for the poison, as the lesser evil of two. The weird and thrilling love-motive is heard in the orchestra, first below, then on the highest tremolo notes of the violins. As it grows more intense and passionate, its strains are reflected in the mimic action of the two lovers, whose sullen resolve to die gradually changes to the rapturous ecstasy of amorous intoxication, till they meet in a passionate embrace. At this moment the ship has arrived in the harbor. The curtain that has shut off the sight of the poop is pushed aside, and we behold the men swinging their hats and greeting the King, who approaches on a small boat to meet his bride, while his castle is seen towering above the cliffs on the coast.

Act II. Isolde is soon to be married to the King, but her heart is with Tristan, and the one longing of her soul is for the end of the hateful day and the approach of night when she may see her lover. She is with Brangäne in a beautiful garden adjoining her apartments. It is a warm summer night. A torch is burning, the extinction of which is to announce to Tristan that all is safe for a clandestine interview. Gradually dying away in the distance we hear two sets of forest

horns responding to each other in different keys, and forming with the dreamy orchestral harmonies the most exquisite tone-picture ever conceived. The infatuated Isolde fancies these sounds are but the murmurings of the leaves trembling in the breezes. The more sober Brangäne knows that what they hear are the horns of the King's attendants, and suspects that the hunting expedition is a mere sham to put them off their guard. For one of the courtiers, Melot, is jealous of Tristan, and has resolved to betray him to the King, in whose company he intends to surprise the lovers. But Isolde is deaf to Brangäne's warnings. She dashes the torch to the ground, where it is extinguished; and in a few moments Tristan comes, as if borne along on the tumultuous tone-waves of the music. In words and tones that are the very onomatopœia of passion, the elemental language of emotion, a wonderful love-duet follows, in which the praises of night are sung as against the spiteful day, whose symbol, the torch, had so long delayed the meeting of the lovers. In a mutual embrace, forgetful of all the world, they gradually sink down on a flower-bench. The bench is on the stage, the flowers are *heard*. The orchestra becomes a perfect Oriental garden of fresh and fragrant melodies, some of them, like tuberose or hyacinth, almost overpowering in their sweetness. The scene is one long *nocturne*, in which the dreamy, sweet, and exquisitely tender leads gradually to an outburst of excitement and unbounded passion which is the superlative climax of *all* music. To quote the poetic paraphrase of Catulle Mendès: —

"Puerile from excess of joy, they content themselves with these two names pronounced together, Tristan and Isolde! . . . But

what is this — a syllable separating these two words? There is something between Tristan and Isolde! These three letters form an odious barrier; it must not be Tristan *and* Isolde, but Tristan-Isolde. . . . They lose themselves in the Nirvana of Love, and already, having ceased to be, retaining of their individual love but a vague, delicious feeling, they dissolve into their common soul, which, large and unfathomable, seems to them the soul of the whole universe."

At its very climax this enchanting love-scene is cruelly interrupted. Brangäne's suspicions were well founded. The King, followed by Melot and attendants, suddenly appears and addresses a string of bitter reproaches to his nephew and benefactor. Tristan, still in the trance of love, replies dreamily that he has nothing to say, then turns to Isolde, asks if she will follow him to the land where the light of the sun does not shine, and kisses her gently on the forehead. At this Melot rushes forward, shouting "Treason," and stabs him.

Act III. The wound was not fatal, for in the third act we again behold Tristan on a couch, unconscious, in the yard in front of his castle in Bretagne, whither Kurvenal had conveyed him after the affray with Melot. Kurvenal had secretly sent for Isolde, hoping that she might once more cure Tristan's wound. A shepherd has been stationed on the rocks to watch for the ship's approach. His quaintly mournful melody is heard alone for several minutes, after the beautiful sad orchestral introduction, and indicates that the ship is not yet in sight. Suddenly the melody becomes excited and joyous: the ship is coming, and Kurvenal rushes off to meet Isolde. While he is away Tristan, delirious with excitement, tears the bandage from his wound just as Isolde is heard calling out his name. She arrives in

time to hear his last word, "Isolde," and to catch his lifeless body in her arms. As she bends over him, bitterly reproaching him for leaving her at this moment, the shepherd rushes in to announce the arrival of a second ship, with the King on board. The gate is quickly barricaded. Kurvenal, after slaying Melot, himself receives a deadly wound and falls down by the side of Tristan's body. The catastrophe was needless; for the King, having heard from Brangäne the secret of the irresistible love-potion, had pardoned Tristan, and come, not to reclaim Isolde, but to unite her with him in marriage. Isolde recovers for a moment to sing those pathetically beautiful last strains, celebrating, as Schuré finely expresses it, "the marriage of two sister-souls with the world-soul."

A POEM FOR POETS

In speaking of *Tristan and Isolde* one feels like the lover who sighs for something stronger than a superlative to express his admiration. It forms, with Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and Goethe's *Faust*, part of the world's great Trilogy of love-tragedies. Of action, in the ordinary theatric sense of the word, there is little in it, except in the first act and toward the end of the third. That Wagner, nevertheless, distinguished *Tristan* above all his other works by the name of "action" (*Handlung*) may be partly due to the fact that he objected to the word "music-drama" on historic and philological grounds. Partly, however, the special claims of this work to the word "drama," in its literal sense, may be made clear in this way: The proper aim of a drama is to represent the growth and conflict of

emotions. This end is usually best attained by rapid and exciting action. But if a dramatist can stir the soul to its inmost depths with a simple action, all the more honor is due to his genius. *Tristan* is emotional, like no other art work ever created; it is a lava-stream of passionate poetry and amorous music; indeed, if any objection to it can be sustained, it is that the emotional tension in it is too great, too constant. That it appeals to emotions to which ordinary mortals are strangers, or which they consider as exaggerated, is not its fault, but constitutes its greatness. It was not written for Philistines; Wagner wrote it for himself and for those who are able to follow him into the tropical regions of art and ethics. It is a poem for poets, a score for musicians.

A poem for poets, because of the variety and subtlety of its psychologic motives. Read and reread it a dozen times, and you will always find new beauties, new links connecting the different parts of the plot, just as in studying the score you become more and more amazed at the intricacy, yet simplicity, and the significance of the melodic web of leading motives. Although poetic imagery is less essential in a musical drama than in a literary drama, because there the music supplies the appeal to the feelings for which a poet usually resorts to similes, Wagner's *Tristan* poem, nevertheless, is full of exquisite imagery which alone would put him in the front rank of German poets. The extraordinary command of all the resources of his language which enables him not only to present his dramatic thoughts with rare conciseness but to choose for its expression apt alliteration and assonance, often combined beautifully with

rhyme, — which in a music-drama is almost like painting the lily, — suggests the verbal fluency of Mr. Swinburne (who has always been a great admirer of Wagner's poetry). There are pages in this poem on which every line is a picture. This remarkable concentration of thought suggests the choruses of Greek tragedy; and some of the musical critics who have undertaken to comment on Wagner's poem seem to have had as toilsome and hopeless a time in their efforts to comprehend him as their philologic colleagues have had with the choruses of Æschylus. To a person of general culture, however, there is not an obscure line in the *Tristan* poem; indeed, those that seem obscure at first are found to be the most pregnant with meaning.

The subject itself has been a favorite one of poets of all countries for almost a thousand years. It is the finest of all Celtic legends, and in Cornwall the supposed grave of Tristan and Isolde is still shown to visitors, as is Juliet's tomb at Verona. The legend relates that over the grave of Tristan and Isolde once grew a vine and a rosebush so closely intertwined that they could not be separated without destroying both. To this famous legend Wagner was, as he relates (VI. 378), attracted not only by its intrinsic beauty, but by its remarkable affinities to the Siegfried legend, on which he was occupied when practical considerations compelled him to interrupt his Tetralogy. Like Siegfried, Tristan is fated to woo his own love for another, and in both cases a magic potion comes into play. But while in the *Götterdämmerung* the catastrophe is the hero's death, in *Tristan* the emphasis is placed on the anguish of hopeless love, which fills out the three long acts.

A SCORE FOR MUSICIANS

A German critic, Louis Köhler, once said there were two kinds of composers, — those who make music and those who make *the* music — or as we should say in English, those who simply *write* music and those who *create* it, *i.e.* provide new harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic *material*. In this sense, the four greatest composers the world has ever seen are, in my opinion, Bach, Schubert, Chopin, and Wagner. And if we take single works to compare in point of originality and creativeness, the palm must, I am convinced, be given to *Tristan and Isolde*. It is a work which raises the whole art of music to a new level, a summit whence we see all that has gone before in musical evolution, while an entire new harmonic and melodic continent is revealed for future explorers. To change the simile, the *Tristan* score is a mine in which composers of the future will find a wealth of new musical material such as no other works but Bach's St. Matthew's Passion, Schubert's songs, and Chopin's Preludes have ever revealed.[1]

Tristan is a score for musicians, for the reason just given. But that does not any the less make it a score for lay men and women; for men and women, I mean, who go to the theatre for the noble emotional gratification which is given by a tragedy, not those who crave for barrel-organ tunes, and vocal tight-rope dancing as an aid to digesting a late dinner; for men and women who are willing to give serious and *active* attention to what

[1] I am aware that this paragraph will make the hair of orthodox musicians stand on end; but that makes no difference. Time, if they live a decade or two longer, will comb it down again.

they see and hear and not for those who want to enjoy their music *passively*, as they do a hot bath. The marvel about *Tristan*, however, is that although it is the most profound and inspired musical work ever written, it really requires no special musical aptitude or study for its appreciation — at least for its partial appreciation. No one but a specialist can ever know all the marks of genius which Wagner has chiselled on this score with the microscopic minuteness of a Japanese ivory-carver. But there is such an elemental force and directness of emotional utterance in this music,— one moment stormy as the March Atlantic, and the next placid as an August lake by moonlight, — that even persons who have no technical knowledge of music are thrilled by it, and feel how it intensifies the tragic denouement of the poem.

Dr. Hans von Bülow had the honor of being the first man who saw the pages of *Tristan*. While he was arranging the orchestral score for piano at Venice, in September, 1858, he wrote to a friend:[1] —

"You may promise yourself a great treat! Wagner, considered purely as a musician, is undergoing a remarkable progress in his development. What I know so far of this work is simply superb, remarkably poetic, much finer in details than *Lohengrin*, and everywhere new, bold, original. At the same time a thematic elaboration as lucid as it is logical, such as no opera heretofore has shown."

Wagner himself, in his essay on *Music of the Future* (VII. 160, 163), has these interesting remarks to offer on his score: —

"This work I am willing to submit to the severest tests that result from my theoretic assertions; not because I formed it in

[1] Oesterlein, III. 71.

accordance with my theory, — for all theory was completely forgotten by me, — but because here at last I moved about with the utmost freedom and the most absolute disregard for every theoretical consideration, in such a manner that in the course of the execution I became aware that I went far beyond my system. Believe me, there is no greater pleasure than this perfect freedom of thought during composition, such as I felt while at work on *Tristan*. Perhaps it became possible to me only through this, that a preceding period of reflection had invigorated me somewhat in a similar way that my teacher once asserted that he had given me strength by teaching me the most difficult contrapuntal arts — strength not to write fugues, but to secure what alone we acquire through strict exercise — independence, confidence."

Bülow's assertion that no previous opera ever composed was characterized by such lucid and logical thematic elaboration, hits the nail on the head. Here, for the first time, was a musical score to which the test could be applied concerning which an English critic of literature has said: "It is the perfection of good English that page should cohere with page in such a manner that only here and there can a few paragraphs be removed without doing injustice to them." That the German critics of thirty years ago should have, almost unanimously, pronounced this score "formless," is one of those extraordinary phenomena which will serve for the amazement and delectation of future generations. It was called "formless" because it did not follow the slovenly custom of making a simple mosaic of independent and unconnected arias, duos, choruses, and ballets, and calling it an opera! The gigantic intellects of these critics could not comprehend the simple fact that a work of art, like an animal, to be "organically" formed, must be *united in all its parts*, and not, like the old-fashioned opera,

a string of *unconnected* parts. The subtlety with which Wagner concatenated every bar of *Tristan* with every other bar in the score by means of reminiscent, characteristic melodies, affords on every page evidence of his subtle genius and amazing technical skill. But this whole question of Leading Motives will be treated in a special chapter, later on.[1]

The assertion that *Tristan* marks a new epoch in the evolution and *creation* of music calls for a few more specifications. We have just seen how it revolutionized the *form* of dramatic music by what Bülow calls its unprecedentedly "lucid and logical thematic elaboration," or, more definitely, by the establishment of a genuinely organic connection of all parts of the drama — the *dramatis personæ* being characterized as consistently in the music as in the poem. No less progressive is *Tristan* in all the material factors of music — Instrumentation, Harmony, Melody, Rhythm.[2] The innovations in the orchestration are those which first move the average opera-goer. If a painter should discover and use a new spectrum with colors never before seen by mortal eyes, he would do for the sense of sight what Wagner has done in *Tristan* for the ear. What a marvellous variety

[1] Elaborate analyses of the motives in this score (and the other music-dramas) may be found in Hans von Wolzogen's *Thematischer Leitfaden*, A. Heintze's *Tristan und Isolde*, Gustav Kobbé's *Wagner Biography*. In H. E. Krehbiel's *Studies in the Wagnerian Drama* there is an interesting comparison of Wagner's version of the Tristan Legend with those of Malory, Matthew Arnold, Tennyson, and Swinburne.

[2] The fact that two dramas of the Tetralogy were completed before *Tristan*, is overlooked here, not only because *Tristan* was produced before those other works, but because it is more radical in its methods and deeper in its inspiration. It marks the climax of Wagner's creative activity.

of tone-colors, many of them entirely new on the musical palette, has he lavished on this score! Yet all this sensuous beauty is placed entirely in the service of the dramatic emotion which it is intended to intensify. At least such is his intention; the orchestra, he says, should never attract attention to itself, but "should serve merely as a coloring material to beautify and emphasize the action." Shall we chide him if, in *Tristan*, the orchestra *does* sometimes completely absorb our attention,— especially in the love-duo, — in spite of his theories and intentions? Note also how refined and subdued the instrumentation is; how the strings and wood-wind prevail, the brass being used chiefly to enrich the harmonic tone-colors, except at a climax.[1]

While the new orchestral colors in *Tristan* fascinate every one from the beginning, the equally original and much more important new harmonic progressions and modulations are apt at first to repel a certain class of hearers whose brains do not readily assimilate new impressions. Indeed, from the severe and (sometimes, at least) sincere condemnation of modern discords pronounced by conservative critics one would infer that they actually give them physical pain. This is to be regretted; but if these persons will read a history of music they will discover that conservative minds were always thus affected whenever an epoch-making composer enlarged the freedom of harmonic progressions. The appreciation of harmony is, in fact, entirely an acquired

[1] But the "boiler-factory" joke continues to flourish in spite of the fact that the principal objection advanced against *Tristan* by the box-holders of the Metropolitan Opera-house in New York was that the music was so soft that it did not permit of the usual operatic conversation without eliciting a chorus of hisses!

the line at *Lohengrin*, which, for him, was already too much "music of the future." He wrote in 1854 concerning this opera, that "the constant changes of harmony and key fatigue even in these brief fragments [the usual concert fragments!], and I cannot conceive how any one can hear this whole opera without complete exhaustion." To-day, of course, *Lohengrin* is all right; but of *Tristan*, according to Dr. Hanslick (*Professor* of *Musical History* at the University of Vienna), "an unabbreviated performance would be equivalent to a murder of the singers as well as the hearers"; while another eminent German critic, Louis Ehlert, wrote in 1882 regarding certain modulations in *Parsifal*, that while it is true that great composers modify our harmonic sense, there is no necessity for "criminal assault" (*Vergewaltigung*). And thus the farce goes on merrily, from generation to generation. Thousands, even of those who had learned to like *Lohengrin*, naïvely fancied — as musical people always do — that the limits of their own intelligence mark the limits of musical evolution, and indignantly cry halt when they run against a *Tristan*. What fools these mortals be!

If those who cry out against dramatic discords because they are not "beautiful" and "sweet" would apply their theory to the literary drama, they would see at once how ridiculous it is. King Lear is not "beautiful," neither is Othello. The emotions inspired by them are those of tragic passion, grandeur, power, pity, pathos, sadness, but not the tender emotions which accompany the Beautiful. In the songs assigned to Eva, Senta, Elsa, Wagner has shown that no one can write more beautiful music than he; but when he comes to discordant passages he uses discords, because discords and mod-

ulations alone can express tragic passions; just as a dramatist in a thrilling situation does not break the spell by letting some one prematurely tell how it is all going to end, so Wagner avoids cadences and premature concords, and passes on from one discord to another, thus keeping the feelings of the hearer at a high state of tension until the end is reached. The younger generation of musicians love Wagner's discords and modulations, as they do those of Chopin, because they afford a glimpse into hitherto unsuspected relationships between remote keys; for discord is but "harmony ill understood." They love them also because to them they owe the æsthetic pleasure of sadness, which is so much more intense than the pleasure of joy.

Technically, it may be said in brief that historians of the future will record as one of Wagner's greatest achievements that in *Tristan* he made harmonies of the ninth as natural as chords of the seventh. To me — and I am sure to many others — chords of the ninth are not discords, but the most voluptuous of concords, especially in the great love-duo, where they are as common as the major triad is in ordinary music. No other composer has known how to use these delicious "discords" for such ravishing modulations. Let me add the words of a specialist, Professor J. C. Fillmore: —

"The essential peculiarity of Wagner's harmonies lies in his recognition of the value and naturalness of the third and sixth relationships. There had been hints of this in Beethoven, Schubert and others. But in Wagner the principle comes, for the first time, to its full recognition and appreciation. He broadened the conception of *tonality* to its utmost limits, to the utter confusion of contemporary theorists. No stricture on him was more common

than the assertion that his music was void of tonality. It is now beginning to be recognized that even those harmonic connections in his works which once seemed most forced, strange, and unnatural, are really simple and easily comprehended. He merely discovered, clearly recognized and applied, certain natural principles of harmonic relationships which had been overlooked by his predecessors. This is one of the strongest evidences of his genius. It was real creative insight."[1]

MELODY VERSUS TUNE

It is a curious fact that in one point of musical terminology the English language has an advantage over the German. We have the word tune to distinguish dance-melody from what may be called dramatic or emotional melody; whereas Wagner, when he wished to make clear to the German "experts" the difference between tune and true melody, had to introduce for the latter the Greek word *melos*. To the illiterate in music, "melody" always means *tune*. If you were invited by Texas cowboys to "give us a tune," and complied by playing something by Haydn or Mozart, instead of *Yankee Doodle* or *Fisher's Hornpipe*, they would inform you that they did not care for "scientific music," or, perhaps, they would ask you when you were going to "quit tuning and begin to play." Nor would you blame the cowboys, for they cannot be expected to recognize as melody anything that is not "quick and devilish," and fit to be danced to. But what shall we say to the fact that, only a few decades ago, the leading musical critics of Europe and

[1] The words of Cervantes that "good wits jump; a word to the wise is enough," should be borne in mind by those who find no "connecting links" in Wagner's modulations. In music as in literature genius consists in discovering new relationships between remote things.

America could not — or said they could not — find any melody in Wagner's operas? Even *Rienzi* was "an opera without music," *i.e.* melody. Later came *Lohengrin* "without a bar of melody," and by the time that it had become orthodox and melodious — although the opera itself, I need not say, had not been changed a bit — *Tristan* had appeared, to be in turn declared unmelodious. The best-known German critic of this generation, Dr. Hanslick, wrote, as late as 1883, that such "continuous melody" as occurs in *Tristan* is not true melody; and that even in the long love-duo, there is only one melodic pearl! H. Dorn wrote, in 1876, that true melody "is a rare thing in Wagner, anyway; *in Tristan there is practically none at all!*" And Louis Ehlert asserted that Wagner is less a melodist than a *Thematiker*, that he rarely gives us more than the "bud" of a melody!

Risum teneatis amici? But Wagner is not the only composer in whom these funny "experts" found no "melody." Louis Ehlert wrote, in his essay on Brahms, that melody is the "soul" of music; that it is rare as pearls; that "Bach and Handel, in proportion to their other grandeur, had it in no great measure"! And the Austrian critic, Grillparzer flatly denied that there was any real melody in Weber's *Euryanthe!* So the "soul" of music is not to be sought for in Bach or Handel or Weber or Wagner! For that we must go to the tuneful Bellini and Balfe and Flotow. What an extraordinary fact here stares us in the face — the fact that the official æsthetics of musical criticism in Germany up to the last quarter of the nineteenth century, was identical with the taste of the Texas cowboy, the whistling street urchin,

and the organ-grinder, in claiming the word melody exclusively for naked tunes that can be danced to!

Never, surely, was there a more oddly assorted "happy family" than these cowboys, organ-grinders, and German critics. We must not censure the cowboys, for they cannot be expected to know any better; but there is no excuse for the critical "experts," who not only had the works of the greatest composers, from Bach to Wagner, to prove to them that harmonic melody is infinitely superior to dance-melody, but who had been frequently enlightened on this subject by the great composers themselves; Schumann, for instance, who wrote: —

> "'Melody' is the war-cry of the dilettante, and undoubtedly music without melody is no music at all. Understand well, however, what they mean by it; they accept as melody only such as is simple and rhythmically pleasing. But there is another kind of melody, and wherever you open Bach or Mozart or Beethoven, it meets you in a thousand different forms: of the inane monotony of modern Italian operatic melodies in particular, you will, I trust, tire soon."

The popular operatic melodies to which Schumann here refers are what we call tunes, that is, dance-melodies, that is, airs consisting of short sections of four bars, followed by four related bars, making up larger sections of eight bars and sixteen bars, to be repeated *ad libitum* with geometric regularity. These tunes, by being played or sung fast enough, can be used for quadrilles, polkas, and waltzes — indeed, in the golden age of Italian and French opera, every new work was immediately hashed up into pot-pourris and sets of quadrilles for the dancing season. To this kind of dance-melody

Wagner referred, in his superb essay on the *Music of the Future* (IV. 166–173), when he said that "it belongs to the childhood of the musical art, wherefore the exclusive delight in it must appear to us childish." It must be distinctly understood that he did not deny the proper uses and value of such dance-tunes. He paid his willing tribute to the pretty airs of Bellini and Rossini; what he denied was that the music-drama is the proper place for such tunes — tunes which, in the old-fashioned Italian opera, are always of about the same character, and adorned with the same merry runs and trills, whether the situation be a wedding or a funeral or a mad-scene.

The blunder made by the Texas cowboys and by Messrs. Hanslick, Dorn, Ehlert, and Grillparzer, is that they mistake the simplest, crudest, and most primitive form of melody — dance-tune — for melody itself. There is a nobler kind of melody — dramatic melody, which ranks as highly above this dance-tune as a Shakespearian drama does above a pantomimic ballet. The dance is entirely out of place in a serious drama. Wagner not only eliminates the ridiculous ballet from the *plot*, he also *eliminates the dance-rhythms from the melody*, following the precedence of Mozart and Weber in their most inspired moments (in *Don Juan* and *Euryanthe*). This is perhaps the greatest of all his great achievements; it inaugurates a new era in dramatic music. The difference between his method and the old style may be made clear in this way: in dance-tunes, at the end of every four, eight, or sixteen bars, there is a cadence, analogous to an end-rhyme. These systematic cadences seem very tiresome and superfluous to a modern listener; they remind him sometimes of a grasshopper which flies

eight feet, alights, flies eight more, and so on. Now Wagner scorns this eight-bar arrangement (which, according to the "experts" is essential to true melody!) and seldom uses a cadence, *i.e.* touches ground, except at the end of an act. His melody, therefore, has a grander sweep — it is continuous, uninterrupted, like the lofty flight of an eagle, and in its most sublime moments affects the imagination like the irresistible movement of a planet. It is this elementary force and grandeur — this o'erarching of a whole act with an unbroken melody — this gradual unfolding of a stately oak from a simple melodic acorn (Leading Motive) — that imposes on the unmusical alike with the truly musical. But in introducing such an innovation in operatic melody, he seemed indeed a bold bad man. The babes cried for their toys; he gave them no eight-bar tunes to whistle in the street or to have the barrel-organs grind out for them. If all literary dramas had up to date been written in rhymed verse and a powerful author suddenly appeared who used only the *continuous melody of prose*, the case would be analogous to Wagner's. It is needless to add that this does not affect the poetic *character* of Wagner's music. Much of our best poetic literature has the form of prose, and the Germans very sensibly give the name of poet not only to verse-makers but to all who devote themselves to *belles lettres*.

Wagner's treatment of melody inaugurates, as I have just said, a new era in dramatic music: it makes *literature* (dramatic poetry) the basis of musical form, in place of the steps of the dance-hall. His melody is constructed on dramatic, psychological principles; that is, it is ready to *change its rhythm or its tempo with the meaning of every*

line of the poetry. An actor, in reciting Shakespeare, does not talk slowly for five minutes, and then quickly for five minutes, as the singers do in the old-fashioned operas which are divided into slow and fast "numbers"; but he accelerates or retards his delivery according as the emotional character of the lines calls for rapid or slow speech; a few words sufficing sometimes to make him modify his pace or tempo for a moment. This is the method followed in Wagner's music-dramas: the melody does not impose a monotonous dance-rhythm on the words, but accepts its form from the poem to which it is wedded. By way of illustration, open the vocal score at random. On page 188 (Bülow's original quarto edition) there are seventeen bars; and now note the changes in tempo and expression: *piu forte; riten.; f; accel.; f; p; sf; crescendo; riten.; f; accel.; f; p; sf; crescendo; very agitated; ff; dimin.; sf; very gradually becoming slower; decreasing in loudness, p.* All these changes are on one page, requiring about half a minute in the performance! Can any one fail to see how this kind of melodic movement vivifies the score a thousand times more than the liveliest operatic dance-tunes of the regular, monotonous, four-bar pattern? No melody in these music-dramas? Go to! Wagner did not claim a straw too much when he asserted (VII. 172) that the music not only does not lose anything by this close union with the words of the poem, but gains a freedom and wealth of melodic development surpassing even the endless variety and capacity of the symphony, which is not emancipated from the dance-form.

No melody in *Tristan!* Why, the whole work, like a Bach score, is polyphonic; that is, every harmonic part

is a melody, a continuous melody. Often two or more melodies are heard at a time, in illustration of the complex dramatic emotion. It is a "forest of melodies" which the myopic cannot see on account of the "trees." The principal melody is now in the voice, anon in the orchestra. It is an emancipated melody, no longer dependent on the dancing-master's geometrical figures, but moving on with a free dramatic *rubato;* no longer imprisoned in one key, but going about from key to key, unfettered, on the bridge of modulation, thus illustrating the relationship of all the keys. What shall we say of "experts" who could find no melody in a work in which not only the vocal parts are melodious, but every orchestral instrument has its melody? Of experts who lavished their praises on Italian operas in which, as Wagner points out, only *a tenth or twelfth part* of the score is devoted to tunes, while the rest is an absolute desert of unmelodious recitative? The Italians themselves, indeed, did not care much even for these tunes, but only for the singers who embellished them with the vulgar cosmetic of *fioriture.* What the French composer Grétry wrote from Rome in 1813 has always been true of Italians at the opera: "If occasionally a crowd filled the theatre, it was to hear this or that singer; but when he was no longer on the stage, every one retired to his box to play cards or eat ice-cream, while the parterre yawned."

How shallow, vulgar, trite, and commonplace are those popular operatic tunes compared with the polyphony, the true *harmonic* melody, of Bach and Wagner! One thing, it is true, we cannot do with this harmonic melody: we cannot whistle it, cannot take it along with

us. It is like the continuous melody which the forest sings to us, and to hear which again we must revisit the trees and the birds and the babbling brooks, with the clear nocturnal sky above, in which the countless stars are revealed ever more clearly and in greater numbers the longer we gaze at them. I cannot sufficiently urge the reader to look up the wonderful page of prose (VII. 174) in which Wagner thus describes nature's melody as the prototype of the *Tristan* melody. Then let him reflect on the fact that this exquisitely poetic and suggestive forest-simile afforded the critics no end of fun and occasion for ridicule!

ROMANTIC LOVE IN WAGNER'S OPERAS

Wagner once wrote that love was the subject of all his dramas, from the *Dutchman* to *Parsifal*. This assertion may be questioned in the case of *Parsifal*, in which love — at least romantic love — occurs only as an episodic possibility; but in the other operas, if we read their stories aright, the centre of interest is in the lovers — Senta and the Dutchman, Elisabeth and Tannhäuser, Elsa and Lohengrin, Tristan and Isolde, Eva and Walter, Siegmund and Sieglinde, Siegfried and Brünnhilde; while *Rheingold*, though it has not a pair of lovers, has for its moral the power of love, which has only one rival — the lust for gold. What strikes one first in Wagner's treatment of the romantic passion is that he evidently believes that love, to be true, must be love at first sight. All his heroes and heroines fall in love at their first meeting — or before. The Dutchman arranges the matter with Daland in three short lines: —

Dutchman. — "Have you a daughter?"
Daland. — "Indeed I have, a faithful child!"
Dutchman. — "Let her be my wife!"

This is on the European plan, through the parent, but Senta soon meets his wishes more than half way. Elisabeth falls in love with Tannhäuser at a vocal tournament, and subsequently confesses her love *à la* Juliet, only "more so," for she has not the cover of darkness or the excuse of fancying herself alone. Elsa's story is the most romantic of all: she falls in love with Lohengrin as seen in a prophetic dream, while he declares his passion at their first meeting. Walter tries to woo Eva on the American plan, after church and *sans chaperon;* while Siegfried is still less ceremonious, for he finds the unprotected Brünnhilde fast asleep in the woods and forthwith woos and wins her with a kiss — the longest kiss on record.

Another amorous trait common to these dramas is the willingness and unselfish eagerness of the heroine to sacrifice herself for the welfare and life of her lover; it is the old feminine ideal of unselfish devotion which the modern viragoes of the so-called "woman's rights" movement are striving so hard to eradicate. Senta throws herself into the sea to redeem the unhappy mariner from the effects of his terrible curse. Elisabeth defies all the laws of propriety by interceding for the life of the sinful Tannhäuser; she prays for his redemption and dies of a broken heart. Elsa stands as a warning example: she is punished for not having unconditional, unquestioning faith in her lover. Isolde expires on Tristan's body; while Brünnhilde immolates herself on Siegfried's funeral pyre.

The essence of modern romantic love, as compared with the crude amorous passion of the ancients, lies in the recent development and emphasizing of the psychic, emotional, unselfish traits of that feeling. The ancient philosophers and poets treated man's love for woman as mere lust, as something degrading and less noble than friendship between men. Modern philosophy and poetry, on the contrary, make man's love for woman superior to friendship; make it, indeed, the most ennobling and refining influence in his life.[1] The contrast between ancient passion and modern romantic love is embodied in the characters of Venus and Elisabeth. Venus shares only the joys of Tannhäuser, while Elisabeth is ready to suffer with him. Venus is carnal and selfish, Elisabeth affectionate and self-sacrificing. Venus degrades, Elisabeth ennobles; the depth of her love atones for the shallow, sinful infatuation of Tannhäuser. The abandoned Venus threatens revenge, the forsaken Elisabeth dies of grief.

In *Tristan and Isolde* we find all these traits of romantic love united. It is, more than any other, the drama of modern love, in which that passion is proclaimed as the SUPREME LAW OF NATURE. Yet there are few poems about which so much rubbish has ever been written. The lovers have been denounced as criminals, guilty of adultery; King Marke as a tiresome preacher and a fool for not killing his nephew on the spot. The magic potion, we have been told, makes mere puppets of the lovers; and H. Dorn calls the play a chemical trag-

[1] The difference between ancient and modern love is discussed at great length in my treatise on *Romantic Love and Personal Beauty*. Fifth edition, 1892.

edy which "may be of interest to apothecaries, but to others . . . it is extremely distasteful." Dr. Hanslick finds the "diseased kernel" of the tragedy in this, that the lovers are not like Hero and Leander and Romeo and Juliet, who fall passionately in love with each other at first sight, and need no potion to inspire passion. Let us examine this last charge first; it throws a glaring light on the competence of these musical critics to judge Wagner as a poet.

The very essence — moral and dramatic — of Wagner's tragedy lies in the fact that Tristan and Isolde loved each other before they drank the potion. This point is brought out repeatedly in the poem, so clearly that he must be a very hasty or obtuse reader who does not see it. Isolde's every action would betray her previous love even if we were not told in vivid lines how she had dropped the avenging sword when his eyes met hers. Of course she could not openly confess this love, because she was a woman, and because Tristan had slain her cousin and bridegroom. As for Tristan, he not only confesses his previous love, but tells us explicitly (in the great duo) why, in spite of it, he had come to woo her not for himself, but for the King. It was done in a fit of defiance of his enemies; he has gone to find a bride for his uncle in order to belie their insinuations that he was plotting to be the King's heir. Such was the situation on the ship before the potion was drunk. They both loved — hopelessly, for she was the King's bride. They both drank the potion heroically in the belief that it would end their life and suffering: when FATE intervened in the substitution of the love-potion for the poison, and willed that they should love *and* live; and in face of fate man is powerless.

But why, if Tristan and Isolde loved before they drank from the cup, introduce that feature at all? For poetic, psychologic, and dramatic reasons. In the first place, it is a part of the old legend, an interesting bit of mediæval local color. It recalls the time when all diseases of the body, all strong affections of the mind, were attributed to potions and other forms of magic influence. For those who have not sufficient poetic sensibility and imagination to sympathize with such a motive, *Tristan* was not written: they will find a more congenial sphere of enjoyment in mathematics or osteology than in poetry and music.

In the second place, a poet with Wagner's keen dramatic instincts could not have possibly failed to utilize the love-potion, on account of its theatric value: it makes the underlying motive of the drama, *the magic, irresistible power of Love,* VISIBLE to the spectators. The drinking of the potion, with the wonderful music accompanying it, is one of the most thrilling scenes in all dramatic literature, and it would have been the climax of imbecility to omit this grand dramatic opportunity provided by the legend. Yet Dr. Hanslick says the love-potion is "undramatic"! Funny, isn't it? Why did Shakespeare become a dramatist instead of a mere book-writer? Was it not because he, the greatest poet that ever lived, felt that in order to make the deepest possible impression on men and women he must make his poetic inspirations *visible* on the stage — that he must reveal the deepest feelings of the soul to the eyes in realistic action? That is the advantage the living drama has over the printed page; and when the poem is allied with music, we have a further reason for retaining such

a motive as the love-potion, in the remarkable affinity that exists between music and the supernatural which all the great composers have felt instinctively.[1]

There is still another point from which we may view and welcome the love-potion, and a most important one: it purifies the moral atmosphere of the drama. Without the irresistible compulsion of the drink, Tristan's actions would be a breach of faith, and his love on the level of an ordinary French drama of conjugal infidelity; with the magic potion he becomes a victim of inexorable fate and excites our pity so that we sympathize with him even though his conduct may seem reprehensible. And this conduct is not so reprehensible as it seems at first sight; indeed, in no instance have the hostile commentators so glaringly exposed their obtuseness as in their failure to see that Wagner has entirely omitted the adulterous element of the legend. His lovers are free from such guilt. Their sense of honor and pride was so great that they had both resolved to die with the secret of their love locked in their hearts, when the elixir compelled them to confess it. The King does indeed come to meet the maid chosen for him, but nothing is said about marriage. After their arrival in Cornwall the lovers meet only twice; the first time in the garden, where they discourse of night and death, and Tristan is fatally wounded; the second time in Bretagne, when Isolde arrives just in time to catch him dying in her arms. He had not made love to the King's wife, only to his bride, his betrothed. This is proved by King Marke's words, "Der mein Wille nie zu nahen wagte," etc., in his first great monologue, and still more unmistakably by his

[1] See the later chapter on *Myth and Music*.

words at the close of the tragedy, when he tells Isolde that he has come not to punish, but to give her in marriage to Tristan. How could he have done this if she had been his wife? Bear these things in mind, and you will see that not only is Wagner's play free from immorality, but that there is nothing "unmanly" in the King's action in chiding Tristan, instead of chopping off his head. He was an old man, he loved Tristan like an own child, and Isolde had been none of his own seeking.

But is it not immoral to make love to a man's betrothed? Not necessarily. Here we need not fall back on the irresistible might of the love-potion. There was something more irresistible than even a magic drink which made Tristan claim Isolde — a law of nature — the Law of Love. He loved her, and she loved him; therefore it was not only their right but their duty to possess each other. An accident had condemned Isolde to marry a decrepit old man who loved her not and whom she loved not. Such a marriage would have been a *crime*, not only against the lovers, but against nature; for, as Schopenhauer has so forcibly pointed out, *in the choosing of mates the welfare of the next generation is at stake.* Love chooses youth, health, beauty; health and beauty are hereditary: hence love-matches provide for a healthy, beautiful progeny, while marriages for money and rank, where there is no love, and one of the two generally old, ugly, or decrepit, have the opposite result. This great Law of Love, which we all feel but which Schopenhauer was the first to formulate, is the moral key to Wagner's tragedy, and explains why every spectator sympathizes with the interrupted lovers and not with the King. It is here that the influence of Schopenhauer

on Wagner may perhaps be traced, and not, as many of the commentators have fancied, in the longing of the lovers for a blending of their souls in death, which is a common pantheistic notion thousands of years older than Schopenhauer.

To sum up: the key-note of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* is Schopenhauer's sublime thought that Love is the highest of all moral and hygienic laws, because it provides for the welfare of the next generation, which is placed in our hands and to which everything must be sacrificed. The magic potion is simply the visible dramatic symbol of Love's irresistible power, and as such it pervades, both poetically and musically, the whole drama. The time will come when Schopenhauer's great thought (which made so deep an impression on Darwin too) will be fully appreciated, and when loveless marriages for rank and money will be considered as immoral as adultery. It is interesting to find that this same thought was the topic which engaged Wagner in the last hours of his life. His last essay, dated two days before his death (and never finished), traces the degeneracy of the human race, and its average inferiority in health and beauty to animals, to the violation of the Law of Love by marriages for rank and money — *Konventions-Heirathen*.[1]

A word more about the poetic aspect of the love-duo. Where the music is so ravishingly beautiful, one might well pardon the poet for nodding; and this excuse appears to be generally accepted even by Wagner's admirers, who seem inclined to admit that metaphysical

[1] *Entwürfe, Fragmente*, etc., 125–129. See also the analysis of the *Tristan* Prelude, in this same posthumous volume (101–103), where the subject of the tragedy is referred to as "the revenge of the jealous goddess of love for her suppressed rights."

discussions on love and death are not exactly the topics dear to lovers. Not to ordinary lovers, quite true. But Tristan and Isolde are not ordinary lovers. They are forced to love, but feel that they cannot enjoy that love unless their hopes and beliefs regarding a union of souls in death are realized; hence, to them, love and death are the most natural topics in the world. Moreover, that is by no means all they talk about. Read over the love-scene again, and you will find that much of it is taken up by the alternate confessions of the two as to their love at first meeting and the reasons why they concealed that love: and this is precisely what lovers just engaged are most likely to do. I would not say, however, that poetically this duo is the finest part of the drama. That distinction belongs to Isolde's swan-song "Mild und Leise," which is perhaps the most wonderful page in all the dramatic literature of Germany. In it the poetry of pantheism becomes a religious ecstasy. The words themselves are here impalpable fragrance and music. He who can even read this apotheosis without a thrill of emotion and moistened eyes is to be profoundly pitied, for he has not the love of divine art in his soul. But oh, the impossibility of translation!

It would take a separate volume to analyze the musical beauties of the *Tristan* score. I will therefore stop to call attention to only one maligned episode. The music of King Marke's great monologue in the second act has often been called tiresome, while it is one of the profoundest and most deeply emotional scenes. Unfortunately, it comes immediately after the grandest climax ever built by musician, — and after that climax of emotional music almost anything else ever written would

seem an anti-climax. In that love-duo Wagner has achieved for music what Shakespeare did for the expression of love in poetry; and as Shakespeare's treatment of romantic love has been the model for poets ever since, so this duo will remain for centuries the fount of inspiration for all writers of amorous music.

GEMS OF TRISTAN CRITICISM

Audiatur et altera pars! A conscientious historian of Wagner's life in peace and war must not neglect to cast an occasional glance into the enemy's camp. Let us begin with H. Dorn, a composer himself, who wrote eight operas, including one on a Nibelung plot. Of all these operas not a note survives; yet it would be rash to say that he did not immortalize himself, for he will surely be known for centuries as the author of the following criticisms on *Tristan and Isolde*: —

"It is the most unfortunate choice of a text-book ever made by a really prominent composer"; "devoid of all moral basis." "Harmony is used in a way which scoffs at its very name." "Of melody there is practically none." "*Tristan and Isolde*, considered as a work of art, is and remains an absolute failure."

Of Dr. Hanslick's opinions some have already been quoted. Here are a few more: —

The first act is "intolerably tedious." The love-duo reveals "a hopeless poetic impotence." "A more anti-vocal, unsingable style than that of *Tristan* could hardly be found anywhere." We must "protest most emphatically against the idea of accepting this assassination of sense and language, this stuttering and stammering, these bombastic, artificial monologues and dialogues, void of all natural sentiment, as a poetic work of art." "The simplest song of Mendelssohn appeals more to heart and soul than ten Wagner operas *à la Tristan and Isolde*."

Dr. Hanslick's "method" comes into play very subtly when he endeavors to crush his opponents by citing the "confession" of a "sincere admirer" of *Tristan*, Louis Ehlert, that "the red-pencil is useless here where only a sword can help." Here are a few more of Ehlert's opinions: —

"Considered purely as a poem, few will be able to read *Tristan* without comic emotions." As a poet, Wagner is "a dilettante"; Marke's monologue produces "a perfectly irresistible desire to laugh," and is "musically tedious." Wagner has written no operas equal to *Don Juan* or *Figaro*. The passion in *Tristan* is not beautiful, but a "Medusalike distortion." And, to sum up, "as a rule *Wagner's opponents are right in all their censures!*"

A nice sort of a "sincere admirer," oh Hanslick! Another great Austrian critic, Ludwig Speidel, calls the introduction and finale "lyric pap," which, I suppose, must be Viennese wit. According to Eduard Schelle, the *Tristan* poem is "in every respect an absurdity, and the music, with some exceptions, the artificial brew of a decayed imagination." A few other pet names bestowed on this music-drama by German critics are "silly," "higher cat-music," "a monstrosity," "sonorous monotony," "grinning and bawling," "a tone-chaos of heart-rending chords."

Not all the critics, of course, were so boorish: some, more in sorrow than in anger, advised Wagner to turn back from his path into the musical wilderness and travel in the operatic highroad of *Lohengrin*. Instead of quoting their lucubrations, it will conduce more to the reader's amusement, if I cite from Thayer's life of Beethoven the remarks of one of the kind-hearted critics of that day advising that composer to use his "acknowl-

edged great talent" in returning from the erroneous style of his third (Eroica) symphony and going back to the lucid simplicity of the first: —

"I am certainly one of Herr Beethoven's most sincere admirers, but in this work even I must confess that there is too much that is shrill and bizarre, whereby the comprehension is greatly impeded and the unity almost lost. [So it seems Beethoven, too, had "no form."] The symphony would gain immeasurably if Beethoven could make up his mind to shorten it [how about using "a sword"?] and give the whole more clearness and unity."

Another critic, less amiable but more "witty," wrote: —

"Some, Beethoven's special friends, assert that this very symphony is a masterwork, that *this* was the true style for higher music, and that if it does not please to-day, this is only because the public is not sufficiently cultivated to appreciate all these beauties; *but that after a few thousand years it would not fail of its effect.*"

Note the fine sarcasm in that last line — the sneer at Beethoven's "music of the future." What a grand privilege it is to be a musical critic! No other profession, not even that of a circus clown, affords such glorious opportunities for making a fool of one's self.

On Dec. 2, 1886, the New York *Times* displayed the following headlines over an account of the first performance in America of *Tristan and Isolde:* "A WORK NOT WANTED OUTSIDE OF GERMANY AND NOT TOO OFTEN THERE. BEGINNING OF THE END OF THE CRAZE FOR SYMPHONIC MUSIC IN THE OPERA." On Jan. 23, 1887, the *Times* had to "eat crow," as the politicians say, by informing its readers, after the *sixth* performance of the same work: "The receipts were the largest ever taken in since German opera was first given in this city."

Some critics have had the good sense to confess their former errors frankly. The English historian, W. S. Rockstro, is a notable instance. Before his conversion he wrote that Senta's Ballad would be remembered ages after Wagner's operas had ceased to be performed in their entirety, and other things to that effect. After his conversion Mr. Rockstro wrote in his *History of Music* that "two thousand years ago the *Antigone* of Sophocles affected the Greeks as *Tristan and Isolde* affects us now." The opening bars are "ravishingly beautiful," and the whole work "may be fitly described as one long unbroken stream of melody, from beginning to end — melody infinitely more impassioned, and not a whit less tuneful, even at the moment of Isolde's death, than the most captivating strains in the poisoning scene in *Lucrezia Borgia.*" But even Mr. Rockstro was not quite courageous and manly enough to confess that the fault was his own. He makes the "unintelligent eulogies" of Wagner's friends, "repeated *ad nauseam*," responsible for all the damage. Of course — no doubt — if the few critics who did praise Wagner — Liszt, Cornelius, Franz, Pohl, Nohl, Raff, Bülow, Köhler — had joined in the general chorus of abuse and misrepresentation, Mr. Rockstro would have found out much sooner that *Tristan* is brimful of melody! Dreadful fellows, those Wagnerites are!

POLITICAL AND PERSONAL

BANISHED AGAIN

In Munich itself, the reception of *Tristan* was, as we have seen, enthusiastic; but this was largely due to the influence of royal favor and the presence among the spectators of many Wagnerites from outside. The Munichers themselves had not the remotest idea that they were looking on a musical genius greater than any that Germany had ever seen, and with the grandest art-work produced up to that date. Of the local papers only one assumed an attitude that was at least neutral, if not friendly. How immeasurably *Tristan* was above the head of the local editors may be inferred from the fact that when Ludwig Nohl in 1864 sent a favorable article on the *Flying Dutchman* to the leading newspaper, the editor declined it on the ground that while he found his writings on Beethoven and Mozart excellent, he could not understand his admiration for Wagner, who "placed Mozart so low" (!) and whose poems were so "silly"![1]

In the hope that *Tristan* would soon find its way from Munich to other opera-houses, Wagner was once more doomed to disappointment. Even in Munich it was not sung again till four years later. Weimar was the first

[1] Nohl, *Neues Skizzenbuch*, p. 135.

city to repeat the experiment (1874), the departure of Dingelstedt having left the field free again for the former modern tendencies. Berlin came next, in 1876, with a good performance, the result of which, however, as Ehlert chronicles, was "an honorable fiasco" — for the audience! But the greatest blow to Wagner's hopes was the death of his ideal tenor, Schnorr, only a week after he had returned to Dresden from Munich. His adipose physique had made him liable to illness; he had complained to the Munich stage-authorities of the intolerable draught to which he was exposed while lying on his couch throughout the third act of *Tristan;* no attention was paid to these complaints, and the result was an attack of inflammatory rheumatism to which he succumbed. Unscrupulous enemies of course asserted that Wagner's music had killed him. Schnorr's last moments were filled with apprehensions that his friend might be held responsible for his fate; his last regrets were that now he could not live to create the rôle of Siegfried. On the news of his death, Wagner hastened to Dresden with Bülow to attend his funeral; they arrived a few hours too late. It was a bright day in July; the coachman informed them that 20,000 singers were coming to Dresden for a festival. "Alas," said Wagner to himself, "*the* singer is no more." On him he had placed so many hopes for *Tristan* and the *Nibelung's Ring!*

Other disappointments followed. Even a king had not the power to arrest the fury of the anti-Wagnerian Fates. Everything was anti-Wagnerian — politics, religion, society, musicians; all these forces combined in a frantic effort to drive him out of the city. His dream of happiness was over.

"There was a short time," he wrote to Frau Wille in September, "when I really believed I was dreaming, so happy was my mood. This was the time of the *Tristan* rehearsals. For the first time in my life I was here embedded with my whole mature art, as on a bank of love. . . . The first performance without a public audience only among ourselves, given out as a dress-rehearsal, was like the realization of the impossible."

Then came the death of Schnorr.

"Since that time I am in a sad mood. I was lonely among the high Alps, now I am lonely here. I cannot speak to any one, and am always supposed to be out of town. The wondrous love of the King keeps me alive; he takes care of me, as no human being ever took care of another. I live within him, and will live to create my works for him. For myself I really live no longer. . . . My love of work consumes all my thoughts. The *Nibelungen* are now to be completed."

One might have thought that an artist who thus lived in retirement, devoted solely to the creation of music-dramas, might be left alone by political and religious schemers. But Wagner was "the King's favorite"; that was enough to create enemies by wholesale. How they chuckled when, previous to the *Tristan* performance, the King did not attend some Wagner evenings given at the Opera. The rumor immediately spread that the "favorite" had fallen. But the simple truth was that the King had begun his habit of enjoying Wagner's operas as sole spectator. Disappointed in this insinuation, the enemies put their heads together and hatched out canard after canard. Nothing was too mean and contemptible for their Philistine minds to stoop to. They declared that while he was living in luxury he allowed his wife in Dresden to starve. Her denial of this slander was

briefly referred to in a previous page. Here is the noble and womanly letter she wrote, a few weeks before her death: —

"The malicious rumors concerning my husband, which have been for some time published by Vienna and Munich newspapers, oblige me to declare that I have received from him up to this day an income amply sufficient for my maintenance. I take this opportunity with the more pleasure as it enables me to put an end to at least one of the numerous calumnies launched against my husband."

Equally absurd and groundless were the divers political rumors disseminated by the enemy. We have seen that, according to his own statement, the King was in the habit of looking at the ceiling and whistling, if he ever broached a political subject. He was accused of being the head of a "demagogic clique" which tried to incline the King to favor "Prussian designs"; whereas, in reality, his feelings towards Bismarck and Prussia were anything but friendly. The fact that his former revolutionary partner, August Roeckel, recently released after thirteen years' imprisonment, visited him at this time, gave occasion to bring to the fore the former "rebellious" and "unloyal" conduct of Wagner at Dresden; but, as Von Bülow pointed out,[1] Roeckel had come to Munich merely to hear *Tristan;* and as regards the progressist party, Bülow gives his assurance that Wagner kept apart from it so completely that he did not even know the leaders personally and had only once called on the editor of the *Neueste Nachrichten* in order to thank him for having preserved a purely "literary" attitude toward the

[1] Letter to the Berlin *Kreuzzeitung*, printed Dec. 21, 1865.

scandals in circulation. Wagner had suffered too much from political matters to care to be personally concerned in them again. Bülow relates that even at Zürich he had kept aloof from other German fugitives, many of whom maligned him in consequence. Bülow also gives his solemn assurance that in the royal interviews with the architect Semper at which he was present, no allusion whatever was made to politics; and he points out finally, regarding the liberal party, that it was at any rate devoted to the royal house — a virtue which the native-clerical party could not claim.

It was from this clerical, Ultramontane, or old-Catholic party that the principal opposition came. Grounds for attack were easily manufactured; for, had not Wagner shown in his writings sympathy, at first with the left wing of Hegelianism, and, more recently, with Schopenhauer, the scoffer at church and religion? The following citation from an editorial article in the *Vossische Zeitung* of Berlin (Dec. 17, 1865) shows what tactics were adopted by the Ultramontane writers: —

"The revelations regarding the abyss into which honest Bavaria, together with its old dynasty, was to be precipitated by Richard Wagner are becoming more and more gruesome" (!) "'Not music alone,' says an Ultramontane paper, 'is in question, but obviously an entire system for which he wished to make a convert on the throne. His intention is to place art, and especially the theatre, in a relation to the people which has heretofore been held by religion.'"

More effective even than these political and religious canards were the rumors concerning the way in which Wagner was depleting the royal treasury. Fabulous sums were mentioned as having been paid to him, and

the comic papers represented him as knocking at the door of the mint whenever his pocket was empty. Documentary evidence that he could not get money whenever he wanted it may be found in some letters addressed by him to the vocal teacher, Friedrich Schmitt, in Vienna.[1] In one, dated March 12, 1865, he begs his friend to raise a sum of a thousand florins for him, for a year, at from ten to twenty per cent interest. On Oct. 11, 1865, reference is again made to the necessity of getting this check. Now it is not likely that he would have borrowed money at such a rate of interest if he could have had it from the King for the asking. On Oct. 22, 1866, he writes again to Schmitt: —

"That you, too, should so frivolously — pardon me — have believed the craziest calumnies regarding the King's prodigality, as to seriously believe in the 70,000 florins which he was said to have given me on my birthday, and that you — in consequence of this belief — begged me to interfere in your difficulties, has really dumbfounded me. . . . Against such misapprehensions no weapon is now left me except a resort to silence. My only desire is for the continued prosperity and power of my beloved King, who, it seems, is the only person that really understands me."

In the same letter he says: —

"My influence on the King can therefore relate only in a general way to the course which I must wish that a monarch, supported by the love of his subjects in troublous times, should take in the effort to free himself so far as to be able to appear openly and energetically as a patron of the arts."

It was precisely here that the chief trouble arose. The architect Semper had been asked, early in 1865, to pre-

[1] Extracts from these are printed in Oesterlein's *Wagner Katalog*, III. 16–19.

pare a model of a new Wagner theatre to be built in Munich. Semper complied with the request, and his model was immensely admired at Zürich, where it was first placed on view. The crisis appears to have been precipitated by the report that this theatre was actually to be built, and that it was to cost seven million marks ($1,750,000). That such a sum should be drawn from the royal treasury and deducted from the perquisites of beaurocratic circles was not to be tolerated. In later years King Ludwig expended much larger sums on his luxurious castles, far away from the city, where no one was benefited by them. The success of the Bayreuth Festivals has shown, moreover, that many millions of dollars would have flowed into the pockets of the Munichers had they allowed the King and Semper to build one of the finest theatres in the world in their city, and make it the place for the Festivals projected by Wagner. But when all the newspapers were combining with professional musicians, politicians, and priests in declaring Wagner a charlatan and a dangerous person, the populace itself can hardly be blamed for having fancied that this tempest in a teapot really threatened ruin to the country. The King was informed by his confidential advisers, supported by the chief of police and the Archbishop, that there was actual danger of an insurrection. His answer was: "I will show my dear people that I place its confidence, its love, above everything"; and he begged Wagner to leave the city until the storm had blown over.

The enemies chuckled with delight. They fancied the "monster" had been got rid of for good. But the King was not such a fickle lover. As Wagner wrote to Praeger: —

"The stories you read in the papers of my flying the country are wholly untrue. The King did nothing of the kind. He *implored* me to leave; said my life was in danger; that the director of the police had represented to him the positive necessity for my quitting Munich, or he could not guarantee my safety. Think, so greatly did he fear the populace! The populace opposed to me? No; not if they knew me. My return, I am told, is only a question of time, until the King is able to change his advisers. May he come out of his troubles well."

Banished again! Was ever man so unfortunate? But there was one consolation. In this misfortune, as in the catastrophes in London and Paris, the nobility of his character, artistic and personal, stands out proudly against the contemptible meanness, cowardice, and mendacity of his enemies. Their motives were pure selfishness and malice; his sole aim was to find a theatre and funds that would enable him before his death to superintend the production of the greatest art-works ever created on German soil. Can we wonder that during this second exile he sympathized more than ever with the pessimism of Schopenhauer, with his contemptuous denunciation of mankind, his bitter and unsparing exposure of all the petty, selfish, and sensual motives which thwart the efforts of art to assert itself in a utilitarian world?

AN IDEAL SWISS HOME

The Munich dream — disturbed by so many nightmares — had lasted just a year and a half. In May, 1864, he had arrived in Munich; in December, 1865, he returned to Switzerland, his usual refuge in moments of distress. After a brief sojourn at Vevey and Geneva,

and an excursion to Southern France, he returned to his old haunts at Lucerne. When the King requested him to leave Munich, he did so not only much against his wishes, but he evinced his continued good-will by granting his friend an annuity of almost $4000. With this in prospect, Wagner was able to look about for a home that would give him the seclusion, comfort, fresh air, and inspiring scenery that he always found such great aids to his composition. About half an hour's walk from Lucerne there is a sort of promontory known as Triebschen. This, for six years,— until he moved to Bayreuth,— became his home. And a more delightful home it would be difficult to find anywhere: the open lake on three sides, to the left Lucerne, straight ahead the sunny peaceful Rigi, to the right the stern, storm-threatening Mt. Pilatus. The two-story square house itself is without any pretensions to style or beauty, but is roomy and inviting.[1]

In Munich, after the King had decided that the *Nibelung's Ring* should be produced as soon as it was completed, the composer had taken up *Siegfried* again, after an interruption of seven years. The furious opposition aroused against the project of a Nibelung Theatre and Festival induced him, however, to resume the *Meistersinger* score, since that would not call for such special conditions. To this he now devoted himself at Triebschen. The domestic comforts and superior table which

[1] This house is now the property of an eccentric American, who has surrounded it with beautiful gardens and keeps a large kennel of dogs, but absolutely refuses permission (he is said to have denied it, a few years ago, even to Cosima Wagner) to see the interior. His nearest neighbor is the Chevalier von Hesse-Wartegg, who lives in a charming villa with his wife, *née* Minnie Hauk.

the King's pension enabled him to enjoy, had a beneficial effect on his health. In place of the two or three hours to which ill health had limited his daily work in Zürich at the time when petty cares lowered his vitality, he now devoted himself to his task from eight in the morning till five. The evenings were given up to walks and to social diversion. The wife of Hans von Bülow, with her children, had accompanied him to Triebschen, and in June Bülow himself arrived, and made the pianoforte arrangement of the introduction to the *Meistersinger*. Wagner's enemies had succeeded in making Munich "too hot" for him, too. Leaving his family at Lucerne, Bülow went to Basel in the winter to earn his living as a piano-teacher. In October Wagner had been so lucky as to secure a new assistant who was destined soon to become his greatest interpreter: Hans Richter arrived and forthwith set to work copying the first act (which was at once forwarded to the publisher) while the composer was completing the sketch of the third act.

ROYAL AND OTHER VISITORS

Besides Bülow and Richter, Wagner had some other interesting visitors during the first three years of his sojourn at Triebschen. One of these was no other than King Ludwig himself, who gave, by his repeated visits to his friend, at so considerable a distance from Munich, the most convincing proof that his personal admiration for him had not decreased and that great must have been the pressure brought to bear on him before he could have been induced to request one so dear to him to leave the capital. These visits of course gave great displeas-

ure to the Munich Philistines. In a letter[1] to a dressmaker in Munich named Bertha (whom we shall meet again presently), Wagner's cook, Verena Weidmann, complains that she has been very busy on account of the presence of Madame von Bülow and all her family; adding, "there is again a great hubbub in Munich because the King came to us, and I am beginning to believe that we shall never return."

These royal visits were made incognito, and gave rise to the most romantic rumors. The French poet, Catulle Mendès, author of a charming book of essays on Wagner, gives an amusing account[2] of a visit he paid with two friends — a gentleman and a lady — to the object of his adoration about this period, and how astonished they were at the obsequiousness of every one in the hotel, the landlord even coming to the carriage to kiss their hands when they went for a drive to Triebschen. In the streets the people stood in a line with uncovered heads as they passed. Moreover, if they went to visit Wagner in a row-boat, which was the shortest way, they were followed across the lake by some Englishmen, who waited for hours near Wagner's house. On inquiring at the hotel why such a fuss was made over a few poor devils of tourists, they discovered that Mendès was taken for King Ludwig, his friend for Prince Taxis, and the lady for — Madame Patti! It was useless to protest their innocence. "Sire," said the landlord, "everything shall be in accordance with your Majesty's wishes, and, since that is desired, the incognito shall be respected." The Englishmen had accompanied them in the belief that

[1] Manuscript preserved at Oesterlein's Wagner Museum in Vienna.
[2] *Richard Wagner*, pp. 5–17.

Madame Patti was visiting Wagner to study with him a new rôle, and in the hope of hearing a few strains!

Catulle Mendès had met Wagner in Paris some years previously, and was known to him as one of his most ardent champions. They expected, therefore, to be well received, but were hardly prepared for the cordial demonstrations with which they were welcomed. Wagner threw his cap in the air, danced for joy, embraced them, and dragged them off to his house, where he insisted on their spending most of their time during their sojourn of several weeks. They were struck, as before, by "the magnificent expression of dignity and serenity" in his face, his small pale lips, the large beautiful forehead, and especially the clear, frank, dreamy eyes, "like those of a child or a virgin." More than once, when they called early, they surprised him in his strange morning dress: —

"Coat and trousers of golden satin embroidered with pearl flowers; for he had a passionate love for luminous stuffs that spread themselves like sheets of flame or fall in splendid folds. Velvets and silks abounded in his drawing-room and his study, in broad masses or flowing plaits, anywhere, without the pretext of furniture, without other reason than their beauty, to give the poet the enchantment of their glorious brilliancy."

While they were waiting for dinner in the large salon with its fine view of the mountains, the guests were sometimes seated, but the nervous and active host never. Mendès does not remember to have seen him seated a single time except at meals or at the piano. Always going and coming, moving about the chairs, searching in all his pockets for his snuff-box, which always seemed lost, or for his spectacles, which were sometimes hung up

on the chandeliers, but never on his nose, taking off his velvet cap, jamming it between his hands, putting it back on his head, he was always talking, talking, talking; about Paris, about *Parsifal*, about the King, about Rossini, about newspapers, Bach, Auber, Weber, Schroeder-Devrient, Schnorr, *Tristan*, and a hundred other topics, while his guests, overwhelmed, laughed and wept with him, indulged in his visions and ecstasies, wherever his imperious words led them. Towards the Parisians and Paris, in spite of the *Tannhäuser* affair, he not only had no ill feeling, but, says Mendès, "I saw his eyes suffused with tears at the mention of a certain corner-house which he remembered and which had been demolished."

Another French visitor, Judith Gautier, daughter of the great poet, has given us a charming description of some happy weeks she spent as Wagner's guest at Triebschen.[1] She dwells on the enthusiasm which had led her to write a few essays on his music in Paris and forward them to him for his criticism or possible approval, hardly daring to hope for an answer from one so great and so busy. A few weeks later, however, she received a letter in a handwriting which she knew not, but divined. Wagner cordially thanked her for her articles, in which he had found nothing to correct or suggest, and begged to enroll her in the small circle of true friends whose clairvoyant sympathy constituted his only fame. He added that he hoped soon to see her in Paris; but as he did not come, she finally concluded to go and call on him at Lucerne. When she arrived, she hardly had the courage to carry out her plan. Such strange stories were told about him. She was informed that no one

[1] *R. Wagner et son Œuvre.*

was allowed to enter his house, which was peopled by a seraglio of women from all countries, in luxurious garments. The composer was represented as being unsocial, sinister, living in strict seclusion, guarded by two large savage black dogs.[1] Of course, she found all these things to be the usual anti-Wagnerian fables. There was at least one dog, it is true, a big Newfoundland named Russ, but he was not savage, and he soon became a good friend of the Frenchwoman and paid her visits at the hotel. Nor was his master as black as he had been painted. To her, as to all who did not persecute him, he was one of the most amiable men she had ever met. What had struck her most on first meeting him, even more than his massive head and keen glance, was "the expression of infinite kindness which played about his lips and which none of his portraits had led me to look for. This almost celestial kindness I had occasion to notice constantly; it was reflected in the veneration felt toward him not only by his family but by all about him; the personnel of his small home even abused his amiability." It was true heart-politeness and not the merely "theoretical" civility so common in the world. "A Frenchman, Count Gobineau, said of Wagner, 'He can never be perfectly happy, because he will always have some one about him whose sorrow he must share.'"

Madame Gautier does not overlook that temper of his which at all times of his life led to explosions of wrath or to excessively frank and violent utterances which did

[1] Similar stories are still in circulation in Lucerne, where I was informed in 1891 that at times, when King Ludwig was Wagner's guest, these dogs kept at bay the messengers sent after him from Munich and compelled them to wait several days, till it suited His Majesty's pleasure to become visible! Also stories about nocturnal boat-rides, etc.

not spare even his best friends. But they were, as she adds, but momentary ebullitions, always followed by remorse and a sincere desire to repair the damage to personal feelings. At Triebschen there were few opportunities for this volcanic side of his character to come to the surface; he lived alone with the Bülow family, and visitors were infrequent. Much of his time was devoted to reading, in which he took great pleasure: "In these hours of peace and contemplation he had moments of divine contentment. An expression of incomparable tenderness hovered over his features, and a pallor, which was not that of ill-health, suffused his face like a light cloud."

Franz Liszt was another interesting visitor of the Triebschen refugee. The tale of his visit, as related by Pohl,[1] who was his companion, is somewhat mysterious and romantic. The two great musicians had not met as frequently after Wagner's amnesty as they must have wished, for Liszt had gone, in 1861, to live in Rome. The reader has perhaps wondered why, since 1861, there have been no more citations in this volume from the Wagner-Liszt Correspondence. For the simple reason that it comes to an end in that year. When the two volumes first appeared, it was taken as a matter of course that another one, if not two, would follow; yet the statement has been made by those who claimed to have it from Cosima Wagner herself, that there are no more of these letters. But it seems improbable, almost incredible, that two such intimate friends who had exchanged 316 letters in twenty years, should not write another one in the twenty-two years following. Liszt's

[1] Kürschner's *Wagner Jahrbuch*, 1886, pp. 78–84.

departure from Weimar was a serious blow to Wagner, for it left him for seven years (1857–1864) without a "Bayreuth," such as Weimar had been for ten years. Yet Liszt had not left that city of his own choice, but simply because the despotic Intendant Dingelstedt had upset all his plans in regard to the "music of the future"; his departure was therefore no cause for a "rupture," such as rumor said existed between him and Wagner. Dr. Hanslick remarks:[1]—

"It is well known that a long estrangement came between the two friends, the principal cause of which is assumed to have been this, that Liszt's feelings as a father and a Catholic priest decidedly revolted against a marriage of his daughter, Bülow's wife, with Wagner. Liszt was not present either at the first performance of *Tristan and Isolde* in Munich (1865) or at the laying of the corner-stone of the Bayreuth Theatre (1872). The reconciliation did not take place till later, and continued up to Wagner's death."

This comes about as near the truth as Hanslick's statements usually do. In the first place, it is absurd to attribute any such motives to Liszt, for the simple reason that he was in the very same boat as Wagner. For years he too had wished to marry a divorced woman, but was restrained by religious customs (see his last printed letter to Wagner); and Liszt was not the man to find fault with others for following his own example; moreover, Wagner and Cosima were not married till 1870. In the second place, there was obviously no "estrangement." If Liszt did not attend the *Tristan* performances, he nevertheless visited Wagner at Munich in 1864; and in the autumn of 1867 he again called on him, just after the *Meistersinger* score had been completed.

[1] *Musikalisches und Literarisches*, p. 28.

It is this visit that Pohl describes. He had met Liszt at Stuttgart and been asked to accompany him to Basel, whence they went to Triebschen. Liszt evidently had some secret to talk over with Wagner, so Pohl allowed him to proceed alone to the villa while he went on a lake excursion. When he returned to the hotel he found Wagner's coachman waiting for him with orders to bring him over, bag and baggage. Although Pohl failed to discover the cause of Liszt's mysterious visit, he was amply compensated. To quote his own words: —

"When I arrived, Liszt was sitting at the Bechstein grand, with the open orchestral score of the just-completed *Meistersinger* before him; the first act had just been played through, and Liszt had begun the second. To see him play this score, utterly new to him, and one of the most difficult in existence, at first sight, was astounding, unique in fact. Wagner sang the vocal parts; I have never heard a more beautiful performance of *Die Meistersinger*. This truthfulness of expression, this perfection of phrasing, this clearness in all details, was enchanting. Only at the finale of the second act did Liszt hesitate — 'That must be heard on the stage; it is too polyphonic to be reproduced on the piano,' he said. . . . The third act pleased Liszt most of all — such a thing no one could write but Wagner, he exclaimed repeatedly, stopping in his astonishment and delight, to play some passages over again."

The soirée continued till midnight. Wagner, who was always very kind to his servants, had considerately sent them to bed, as they had to get up before five to take away Liszt; so he personally lighted the candles, showed his guests their rooms, and then locked the house. After Liszt's departure he did not see him again till eight years later, when he came from Vienna to Pesth to direct a concert for the benefit of the Bayreuth funds, at which Liszt played.

LOVE OF LUXURY

While Pohl was eating his first supper at Triebschen Wagner told him all about his house and what trouble he had had to get it comfortably arranged. There had been no stoves, and in the salon he had put a new fireplace which had taken the Lucerne workmen an incredibly long time to build.

"But now," says Pohl, "everything was in order, newly carpeted and furnished. Many things Wagner had brought along from Munich; it is well known that he had an astounding talent for cosy arrangement and tasteful decoration. All the rooms were brilliantly lighted, partly by chandeliers, partly by wall-lamps; in his bedroom a red glass lamp was burning."

So far Pohl. The alterations in the house apparently did not meet with the approval of "Vronka," as the cook was called. In one of her letters to the Viennese dressmaker, Bertha, she growls that

"the workmen never get out of our house; Master is having the whole house arranged according to his ideas." And in another letter (Sept., '68): "In our house the greatest disorder prevails; they are building, and on a large scale; Master is, indeed, having all this done at his own expense, which I can hardly approve, since after all it is not his own house. . . . Otherwise it is very lonely here; no one comes except these workmen."

Vronka's letters also contain a certain kind of items which touch upon the oddest of Wagner's foibles. On June 26, 1866, she promises Bertha some money from her master in a few weeks, and orders twenty-five to thirty ells of light blue atlas for the bed. On May 12, 1867, we read, "Yesterday a check for a thousand florins

was sent to you"; and again, on Sept. 9, 1868, "At Master's request I send you herewith a thousand florins." It is satisfactory to read, on such unquestionable evidence, that Wagner paid his bills, for his enemies constantly asserted that he did not. But what were these articles that cost him such big sums? The answer to this question has been already hinted at, and is to be found in full in a collection of sixteen letters from Wagner himself to his dressmaker, which were sold in Vienna in 1877 for a hundred florins and published in the *Neue Freie Presse* by the feuilletonist Spitzer. They are certainly most remarkable documents, as are the sketches, by Wagner himself, of certain garments that he wanted, in the description of which he was as minute as a writer and illustrator for a fashion journal. Here, for instance, is the kind of a dressing-gown he ordered in one letter: —

"Pink satin, stuffed with eider down and quilted in squares, like the gray and red coverlet I had of you; exactly that substance, light, not heavy; of course with the upper and under material quilted together. Lined with light satin, six widths at the bottom, therefore very wide. Then put on extra — not sown on to the quilted material — a padded ruching all round of the same material; from the waist the ruching must extend downwards into a raised facing (or garniture) cutting off the front part. Study the drawing carefully: at the bottom the facing or *Schopp*, which must be worked in a particularly beautiful manner, is to spread out on both sides to have an ell in width and then, rising to the waist, lose itself in the ordinary width of the padded ruching which runs all round."

And so on. Whence we may infer that the composer of the *Meistersinger* designed his dressing-gowns as carefully and as elaborately as his operatic scores.

Besides the dressing-gown, many other things were ordered, always with the same minute indications as to form and color: silks, satins, laces; pink, green, blue, gray. The writer is very particular, too, in regard to the shades, as in this sentence: "Do not confound No. 2, the dark pink, with the old violet pink, which is not what I mean, but real pink, only very dark and fiery." One of his accounts included 300 ells of satin in thirteen colors, the cost of which amounted to 3010 florins. The sixteen letters cover the period 1864–1868, the first of them being dated at Penzing (near Vienna), and the others at Munich and Triebschen.

If the Socratic "Know thyself" is the highest test of wisdom, Wagner was a very wise man when he wrote to Liszt: "I am much better qualified to squander 60,000 francs in six months than to earn it"; or to Praeger: "By nature I am luxurious, prodigal, and extravagant, much more than Sardanapalus and all the old Emperors put together." His penchant for the good things in life was revealed in his boyhood. Glasenapp relates[1] how, when Richard was eight years old, he one day traded off his volume of Schiller's poems for a Windbeutel (a sort of cake) at conditor Orlandi's, opposite his home. Praeger, when Wagner was his guest in London, had occasion to note his curious craving for certain luxuries of life: —

"The first thing he wanted was an easel for his work, so that he might stand up to score. No sooner was that desire gratified than he insisted on an eider-down quilt for his bed. . . . When he arrived in London, his means were limited, but nevertheless the satisfaction of the desires was what he ever adhered to."

[1] Kürschner's *Wagner Jahrbuch*, 1886, p. 65.

On another page, after referring to the attacks of erysipelas from which Wagner had suffered ever since he was a boy, and which had made his nervous system so delicate, sensitive, and irritable, Praeger gives this extremely interesting revelation: —

"Spasmodic displays of temper were often the result, I feel firmly convinced, of purely physical suffering. His skin was so sensitive that he wore silk next to the body, and that at a time when he was not the favored of fortune. In London he bought the silk, and had shirts made for him; so too it was with his other garments. We went together to a fashionable tailor in Regent Street, where he ordered that his pockets and the back of his vest should be of silk, as also the lining of his frock-coat sleeves; for Wagner could not endure the touch of cotton, as it produced a shuddering sensation throughout the body that distressed him."

The psychologic and biographic import of this seemingly trifling observation is great; it throws light both on Wagner's irritable temper and on his craving for luxury. It should teach pachydermatous Philistines not to judge thin-skinned men of genius from their own point of view. No doubt the silk and satin which Wagner wore on his person by day and covered himself with at night exercised a soothing effect on his nerves, overwrought by excessive work and continual worries and disappointments.

This applies to the *stuffs* he wore; but how about the colors? How about the rich furniture, and the gorgeous curtains of silk and satin that divided his rooms in place of walls? Did they, too, serve to soothe his nerves? On the contrary, it is probable that he loved these rich colors, — which he could find in such gorgeousness only in silks and other fineries, — because they stimulated

his fancy through the eyes. Rumor had it that he altered the color of his surroundings and dress in accordance with the nature of the operatic scene he was at work upon. This may or may not have been true, but it seems certain that these bright colors had an exhilarating and inspiriting effect on him. The dark, misty winter-weather of Switzerland made him inclined to melancholy, and disinclined to work, while the bright colors of his silk surrounding and the brilliant illumination helped him to brave the dreary winters, and to bring some of the glories of Nature's colors and cheering sunshine into his home. Moreover, a psychologist would expect that a man who had an ear for delicate shades of orchestral sounds such as no mortal ever had, would be correspondingly refined and dainty in his color perceptions: and we have seen how particular Wagner was in regard to shades and tints. It is therefore absurd to treat this matter, as his enemies did, simply as "feminine love of finery" which in a man is "contemptible." True, such æsthetic indulgence does not harmonize with the modern conception of man as a biped who smokes, plays poker, likes to go to war, leaves art and books to women, talks politics, business, and races, and wears black clothes. But men of genius have always been distinguished for certain feminine traits in their character; Wagner had more than one such trait, and though we may pronounce his devotion to gorgeous satin gowns and curtains foolish, it is surely more foolish to make it the basis of attacks on his personality.

Molière, as his biographers tell us, liked a sumptuous life, and his wardrobe was richly supplied. Was he therefore "effeminate"? Were not men in general, a

century or more ago, more addicted to finery than women? It is related that Haydn, before he sat down to compose, "dressed himself with care and always put a diamond ring upon his finger." Most men of genius have some such peculiarity; Schiller, for instance, who could not write comfortably unless he had a rotten apple on his table.

Wagner's letters to his dressmaker, instead of detracting from the nobility of his character, only serve to emphasize it. The very fact that he had such a sybaritic penchant to luxurious indulgence brings out more conspicuously his astounding heroism and self-denial. It makes it seem little less than a miracle that, with such cravings, he should have lived, for a quarter of a century, a life of privation, discomfort, and annoyance when, by simply throwing his artistic ideals overboard, and remaining in the general operatic "swim," he might have been one of the richest and most petted musicians of the period. Had he written more *Rienzis*, he would have soon revelled in wealth; had he, in Paris, even made the single concession of allowing a ballet to be introduced in *Tannhäuser*, thousands would have been his reward. But not a step would he budge from his artistic ideals, for sybaritic motives or any others. And most wonderful of all, year after year he worked at his Tetralogy, though he was convinced he would not live to see it and certainly never receive any worldly profit from it. That is what I call true nobility of character — twenty-five years of possible comfort and indulgence sacrificed to an art-ideal![1]

[1] And this is the character which that amazing French biographer, Adolph Jullien, calls *dénué de noblesse!!*

LOVE OF ANIMALS

Wherever Wagner made his home he loved to be surrounded by animals. The cook "Vronka," in describing the home at Triebschen to the dressmaker Bertha, writes, after dwelling on the infrequent visitors: "Then we have chickens, peacocks, our two dogs, which often prove a real pastime." Two dogs, the cook says, whereas Mendès, Gautier, and Pohl mention only one. Doubtless the cook knew best; she had to feed them; but the "enormous" Newfoundland Russ was obviously the more notable of the two. Pohl says of this dog (who was poisoned at Bayreuth and now lies buried in the Wahnfried garden at his master's feet), that "it took Stocker, who came out at Russ's signal, some time to convince the faithful guardian that I was an admirer of the master. Afterwards we, Stocker, Russ, and I, became the best of friends."

F. Avenarius, the son of Wagner's half-sister, has preserved[1] two anecdotes which show that a love of animals, like a love of nature, was a trait of Wagner's childhood. The boy went all over town hunting for good-natured dogs, and forming friendships with them. One day he heard whining sounds in a ditch and found a young puppy. Knowing that no such addition to the large family at home would receive official approval, he secretly smuggled it into his bedroom, where he fed it and kept it warm until it was betrayed by its whining. On another occasion his mother heard peculiar squeaking sounds in his room, but could not locate them. When

[1] *Allgemeine Zeitung*, Munich.

the teacher came to give the boy his lesson, he noticed a peculiar, disagreeable odor. Investigation brought to light, in Richard's bureau, a whole family of young rabbits. "The poor things would have died," was the boy's excuse. He had made an air-hole for them, and his sister had provided the food.

Only once in his life did he kill an animal for amusement.[1] He joined a party of young hunters and shot a rabbit. Its dying look met his eyes and so moved him to pity that nothing could have induced him ever to go hunting again. The impression then made on him is echoed in the libretto of his early opera, *The Fairies*, where the doe is hit by the arrow: "Oh see! the animal weeps, a tear is in its eye. Oh, how its broken glances rest on me!" And again in his last work in the pathetic lines of Gurnemanz reproaching Parsifal for killing the sacred swan: "Was that dir der treue Schwan?" etc. — lines which teach the duty of Pity more eloquently than all the essays of Schopenhauer, whom Wagner followed, from an inborn sympathy, in regarding Pity as the supreme moral law.

Animals are introduced in all but three of his operas (*Dutchman*, *Tristan*, and *Meistersinger*). There are horses in *Rienzi*, *Tannhäuser*, *Walküre*, *Götterdämmerung*; a swan and dove in *Lohengrin*; hunting dogs in *Tannhäuser*; a toad and a snake in *Rheingold*; a ram in the *Walküre*; a bear, a dragon, and a bird in *Siegfried*; ravens in *Götterdämmerung*; a swan in *Parsifal*. The swans, the bird, and the dragon are accompanied by

[1] This anecdote, with several others here repeated, is related in *Wagner und die Thierwelt* by Hans von Wolzogen, who had them from Wagner himself.

some of the most characteristic or beautiful music in the respective operas; and it is interesting to note that the swan motive in *Lohengrin* reappears in a modified form in *Parsifal*, just as a few motives from *Tristan* are introduced in the *Meistersinger* where Sachs alludes to that legend. In this delightful kind of self-quotation Wagner followed the precedent of Mozart, who introduces a number from *Figaro* in *Don Juan;* with humorous intent, however, in this case.

When Wagner died, in his seventieth year, several interesting artistic and literary projects were buried with him. One of these was to write "A History of My Dogs." It would have been an extremely interesting little book, no doubt, for, next to his work and a few intimate friends, there was nothing in the world to which he was so attached as to his dogs. From his early youth to his last days he always had one who was his constant companion, whether he was writing or resting. At Magdeburg, in 1834, he had a poodle of musical propensities who accompanied him to all the rehearsals at the theatre. At first he was allowed to enter the orchestra circle, but when he permitted himself to "criticise" the performances, this privilege was taken from him, and he had to wait at the stage door to accompany his master home. Wolzogen thinks it was the same dog of whom Wagner related the following anecdote. One day he took him along on an excursion into the Saxon Switzerland. Wishing to climb a precipitous rock on the Bastei, and fearing that the poodle might come to grief, he threw down his handkerchief for the dog to watch. But the animal was too clever for him. After a moment of deliberation, he scratched a hole in

the ground, buried the handkerchief for safe keeping, and then made haste to clamber after his master.

His next pet, at Riga, was a big Newfoundland dog named Robber. He belonged at first to an English merchant, but became so passionately attached to Wagner, following him by day and lying on his door-step at night, that he was at last adopted as a member of the family. He too accompanied his master to all the rehearsals, and on the way he always took a bath in the canal; being a Russian dog, he kept up this habit even in winter provided he could find a hole in the ice. His career as a musical critic was cut short, like that of the poodle. His favorite place was between the conductor's desk and the double-bass player. The latter he always regarded with suspicion because of his constantly pushing his bow in his direction. One evening a sudden vehement *sforzando* push of the bow proved too much for him, and Wagner was suddenly startled, and the piece interrupted, by the cry: "Herr Kapellmeister, the dog!" Robber had the honor of accompanying his master to Paris, on that stormy ocean trip which lasted almost four weeks; and he is of course the canine hero of the novelette *An End in Paris*, which contains many autobiographic details in the guise of fiction. The temporary loss of this animal in London caused one of the deepest pangs of anguish his master ever felt.

The successor of Robber was Peps, the most famous of all his dogs. He used to say that this dog helped him to compose *Tannhäuser:* —

"It seems that when at the piano . . . singing with his accustomed boisterousness, the dog, whose constant place was at his master's feet, would occasionally leap to the table, peer into his

face and howl piteously. Then Wagner would address his 'eloquent critic' with 'What? it does not suit you?' and shaking the animal's paw, would say, quoting Puck, 'Well, I will do thy bidding gently.'" [1]

In later years at Zürich he loved to talk to his dog when taking his daily walk:—

"He would declaim against imaginary enemies, gesticulate, and vent his irascible excitement in loud speeches, when Peps, 'human Peps,' as he called him, with the sympathy of the intelligent dumb creation, would rush forward, bark and snap loudly, as if aiding Wagner in destroying his enemies, and then return, plainly asking for friendly recognition for the demolition."

Peps was useful in reminding him of his duty towards his body. Thus, in a letter to Uhlig, we read: "I am done up, and must get into the open air: Peps won't leave me in peace any longer." There are numerous other references to Peps in the letters, sometimes comic or satiric, sometimes pathetic.

"To-morrow I go up the Rigi. Peps is barking loudly." From Lugano: "I have written to my wife to come with Peps." "Peps confirms this by a sneeze." In a postscript to Heine: "Peps is still alive, but fearfully lazy whenever he is not barking."

In a word, Peps was treated and looked upon as a member of the family. We have already seen that when Liszt visited his friend in Zürich he received, as a *ne plus ultra* of affection, the pet name of "Double-Peps"; which name he gleefully adopted, signing himself in his next letter "Your Double Peps, or Double extrait de Peps, or Double Stout Peps con doppio movimento sempre crescendo al *fff*."

[1] Praeger, pp. 137, 203.

On returning from an excursion to Paris or London Wagner did not fail to remember his wife with a present; nor was Peps forgotten: —

"Peps received me joyfully at the wagon; but then I have brought him a beautiful collar with his name (now become so sacred to me) engraved on it. He never leaves my side any more: in the morning he comes to my bed and wakes me; he is a dear, good animal!"

But Peps had to die, like all of us. He was too old to be taken to London, in 1855, and must have deeply grieved over his master's four months' absence. Fortunately he survived his return and received him with boundless delight. The day for the departure to Seelisberg, where the *Walküre* was to be completed, had been set, when the journey had to be postponed two days by Peps's illness and death. The following extract from a pathetic letter to Praeger lets us see deeply into Wagner's heart, one of the gentlest and tenderest that ever beat: —

"Up to the last moment Peps showed me a love so touching as to be almost heart-rending; kept his eyes fixed on me, and, though I chanced to move but a few steps from him, continued to follow me with his eyes. He died in my arms on the night of the 9th–10th of the month, passing away without a sound, quietly and peacefully. On the morrow, midday, we buried him in the garden beside the house. I cried incessantly, and since then have felt bitter pain and sorrow for the dear friend of the past thirteen years, who ever worked and walked with me. . . . And yet there are those who would scoff at our feeling in such a matter!"

Four years before Peps died his master had suffered another loss which made him give way to heartfelt, bitter mourning. His "little whistling, chattering,

household fairy," as he called his parrot Papo, died, shortly after he had learned a melody (cited in Letter 22 to Uhlig) which he used to whistle at him when he came home "with unspeakable joy." It became ill, they neglected too long to send for a surgeon, and in the morning it was dead: —

"Ah, if I could say to you what has died for me in this dear creature! It matters nothing to me whether I am laughed at for this. What I feel, I cannot help feeling; and I have no longer any inclination to do violence to my feelings; anyhow, I should have to write volumes to make clear to those disposed to laugh at me, what such a small creature is and can become to a man who in everything is guided *only by phantasy*. Three days have passed and still nothing can quiet me; and so it is with my wife; — the bird was something indispensable between us and for us."

Wagner's love of animals was not merely the semi-selfish emotion which the reciprocated affection for animals gives us. It was manifested also in his deep compassion for their sufferings. Fish stories are not usually considered trustworthy, but the following may be accepted literally as I have it from Mr. Anton Seidl. One morning Wagner was at the station at Bayreuth, waiting for the departure of a train. Presently he noticed a peasant-woman with a covered basket in which there was a constant wriggling motion. He walked up to the woman and asked abruptly what she had in her basket. She removed the cloth and revealed a dozen fish in the agonies of a slow death. Whereupon Wagner suddenly burst out into a furious tirade against the astonished woman, took his pocket-knife and cut off the heads. He got so excited over this incident that, in spite of repeated summons, he missed the train.

He was often furiously excited about the cruel way in which cattle are slaughtered. When, as a boy, he saw for the first time an axe descending on an ox's head, followed by the moans of the poor animal, his companions could hardly hold him back from rushing at the butcher. In London streets he had quarrels with men who ill-treated their horses. A ride on the romantic Lago Maggiore was spoiled for him one day by the sight of poor fowls and ducks which were, as he wrote to Uhlig,

"so vilely tortured, and left to the most cruel privations, that the revolting unfeelingness of the men who had this sight constantly before their eyes, again filled me with violent anger. And to know that one would be merely laughed at if one attempted to interfere."

Our biography of Wagner's dogs is not complete, as nothing has been said of the Viennese Pol, and of a bulldog named Leo whose accidental bite not only interrupted Wagner's work several weeks, but gave rise to a rumor that a mad dog had bitten him. But I must close this chapter with a pretty genre picture painted by Praeger. While in London, in 1855, Wagner took a walk every day in the Regent's Park: —

"There, at the small bridge over the ornamental water, would he stand regularly and feed the ducks, having previously provided himself for the purpose with a number of French rolls — rolls ordered each day for the occasion. There was a swan, too, that came in for much of Wagner's affection. It was a regal bird, and fit, as the master said, to draw the chariot of *Lohengrin*. The childlike happiness, full to overflowing, with which this innocent occupation filled Wagner, was an impressive sight never to be forgotten. It was Wagner you saw before you, the natural man, affectionate, gentle, and mirthful."

PLAYFULNESS AND HUMOR

There are no doubt many Philistines who will look on the trait in Wagner's character just described as childish. That is precisely what it is; and it is, moreover, one of the main traits that distinguish a man of genius from a Philistine, *i.e.* a person who is not a genius nor even able to appreciate genius. In his admirable chapter on Genius (which mirrors Wagner as delightfully as its author) Schopenhauer says that

"every child is to a certain extent a genius, and every genius to a certain extent a child. The relationship between the two is manifested primarily in the naïveté and sublime simplicity which is a fundamental trait of real genius: it also shows itself in various other ways; so that a certain childishness indubitably is one of the characteristics of genius. In Riemer's communication regarding Goethe it is stated that Herder and others blamed Goethe for having always been a big child:[1] they were right in their assertion, but wrong in blaming him. Of Mozart also it is said that he remained a child all his life. Schlichtegroll's Nekrolog says of him: 'In his art he became a man at an early age; but in all other respects he always remained a child. . . . A man who does not practically remain a big child as long as he lives may be a very useful and estimable citizen of the world, but never a genius."

When Richard Wagner was seven years old his stepfather wrote a letter to Uncle Albert in which he complained that the boy left the seat of a pair of trousers hanging on a fence every day. We have seen how he used to terrify his mother by jumping down stairs, slid-

[1] One of his pranks was to stand in the market-place at Weimar with the Duke, cracking whips, and scandalizing the Philistines by his undignified behavior. Byron's childish actions, and the charges of insanity based on them by Philistines, are well known.

ing down the banisters, and perpetrating other daring acrobatic feats; and how he climbed to the roof of the schoolhouse after his playmate's cap. Herein, too, the boy was father to the man. Praeger relates two characteristic anecdotes *à propos:* —

"I remember full well one day, when we were sitting together in the drawing-room at Triebschen (1871), on a sort of ottoman, talking over the events of the years gone by, when he suddenly rose and stood on his head on the ottoman. At the very moment he was in that inverted position the door opened, and Madame Wagner entered. Her surprise and alarm were great, and she hastened forward, exclaiming, 'Ach! lieber Richard! Richard!' Quickly recovering himself, he reassured her of his sanity, explaining that he was only showing Ferdinand he could stand on his head at sixty, which was more than the said Ferdinand could do."

On a previous occasion, when Praeger visited Wagner at Zürich, he was taken on an excursion to the falls of the Rhine. They spent the night in the hotel, and breakfast was to be in the garden, but when the hour arrived Wagner was nowhere to be found. At last shouts were heard from a height. Wagner had mounted on the back of a plaster lion placed at a giddy height: "And how he came down! The recklessness of a schoolboy was in all his movements. We were in fear; he laughed heartily, saying he had gone up there to get an appetite for breakfast."

Judith Gautier gives us a pleasant glimpse of this same trait, in her souvenirs of Triebschen: —

"One of the most remarkable things about Wagner is the youthful gaiety which so frequently breaks out, and the charming good humor which his tormented life has never been able to quench. His entertaining and profound conversation will

become all at once, without transition, full of humor and imagination. He tells stories in the most comical manner, with a fine irony which belongs to him alone. At Lucerne he surprised me by his skill in bodily exercises and by his singular agility. He climbed the highest trees in his garden, to the terror of his wife, who besought me not to look at him, because, she said, if he were encouraged he would commit no end of follies."

Wolzogen relates that one day at the Villa Wahnfried, when Liszt had been playing as only he could play, and every one present was deeply moved, Wagner suddenly got on his knees and hands, crawled up to the pianist, and exclaimed: "Franz, to you people should come only on all fours!"

This playfulness also shows itself in the droll jokes he is always perpetrating in his letters, especially in the apostrophes and signatures. He is constantly varying the monotony of "My Dear Friend" and that sort of thing by such allocutions as "theatre-music-fiddling-fellow"; "dearest friend, brother and regisseur"; "kind old sinner"; "O you most excellent fellow, man, brother, friend, chorus-director, and music-copyist"; "O you wicked fellow"; "Oh you good, fatherly brother"; "much-tortured chamber-musician"; "*Herrgottstausend-sakramenter*"; "Oh you bad man (*homo malus*)"; "O you man, *homo terribilis* (Lin. II. 53)"; "Sancte Franzisce! Ora pro nobis!" "Hi-ha-Heine"; "Heinemännel"; "dear old *play*-fellow" (to punning Wagner was almost as much addicted as Beethoven). More of these playful things are addressed to Fischer than to Uhlig; perhaps Wagner had not forgotten that Uhlig took the broad sarcasm of letter No. 10, in which he described his happiness in Paris, and admiration for Meyerbeer, for a

sober statement of facts. The close of this letter illustrates another form of Wagner's epistolary drollery. It ends in this wise: —

"To my joy, some one is playing the piano overhead; but no melody, only accompaniment, which has a charm for me in that I can practise myself in the art of finding melodies — Adieu! Bon jour! Comment vous portez-vous? Agréez l'assurance de la plus haute considération, avec laquelle j'ai l'honneur d'être votre tout devoué serviteur."

The letter is signed as the French pronounced his name — "Richard Vanier." In other letters he signs himself "your reformed rake," "reformed scamp," "your fussy R. W." Even illness does not sober him, and he must pun on his erysipelas: "I have had 'roses' on my face again; but still my humor will not turn very rosy." And one day when he is too ill to get up he writes a letter to Uhlig in telegraphic style beginning with this untranslatable pun: "Dieser Brief wird Dir sehr gelegen kommen, denn ich schreibe ihn liegend." He coins new verbs out of the names of his operas, talks of "etwas vornibelungen"; tells how he has "getannhäusert," and "gelohengrint," "wir walken morgen küre," and so on. When he gave photographs or copies of his works to friends he usually chose some humorous form of dedication.

His ready wit was often shown at rehearsals. He found that a joke was the most effective and least offensive way of correcting a mistake. When the trombones once played too loud for him, at a rehearsal of *Rienzi*, he remarked, with a smile: "Gentlemen, if I mistake not, we are in Dresden, and not marching round Jericho, where your ancestors, strong of lung, blew down the

city walls."[1] *À propos* of the Mendelssohnian fashion of rattling off an allegro in London, he remarked that evidently in England, "time is music." The very "full" programmes he was called upon to conduct in London, coupled with the cry of omnibus conductors "full inside," led him to call himself the "Conductor of the Philharmonic Omnibus." Praeger relates that when quizzed about his ridiculously clumsy fingering at the piano, "he would reply with characteristic waggishness, 'I play a great deal better than Berlioz,' who, it should be stated, could not play at all."

At Zürich it was his habit, if he got up first, to sit down at the piano and wake his wife by playing, with strange harmonies, "Get up, get up, thou merry Swiss boy." Sometimes he would take up a Leipzig paper, just arrived, and paralyze his wife by reading to her, with the most sober mien in the world, astounding bits of news, till the manifest exaggeration betrayed him. Even in the darkest hour of his life, when he fled to Stuttgart in fear of his pursuing creditors, his sense of humor was not subdued. On the evening before his departure he went once more to the village barber, and after he had been shaved he said, "Yes, my friend, it's no use, I must go; you are altogether too exorbitant." The poor man took this seriously and begged him not to go on that account, as he was willing to shave him for less. Frau Wille, who tells this anecdote, and who had

[1] Mr. Sachleben, one of Mr. Theodore Thomas's violoncellists, remembers some characteristic utterances of Wagner's at a Hamburg rehearsal for a Bayreuth benefit concert. With pathetic drollery Wagner found fault with Hamburg for having so many fine, large buildings but not a single — bass-clarinet! He was standing near the edge of the platform and some one warned him lest he might fall. "That's all right," he exclaimed; "I couldn't help falling on a Jew in this place."

frequent opportunity to note the humorous, sarcastic, and playful moods of her guest, quotes the apt remarks of an English writer that "there is nothing so pleasant as the nonsense of men of genius; but no fool should be present."

WAGNER'S ONLY COMIC OPERA

FIRST MEISTERSINGER PERFORMANCE

THE anecdotes of the last pages form a natural bridge which takes us back to our narrative. The great event now to be considered is the first performance of Wagner's only comic opera, *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*. Although he once refers to his *Siegfried* poem as a "comic-opera-text," and although that drama has not a few comic features, especially in the first act; yet, as a whole, one would hardly class it as a humorous work; at any rate, it is in *Die Meistersinger* that his playful and humorous traits are chiefly exemplified. But before describing this opera a few events that happened in Munich previous to its performance must be briefly related.

In the last of the letters to Heine, dated Munich, March 28, 1868, Wagner invites his old friend to the impending performances of the *Meistersinger*, offering to pay the cost of the expedition. He explains that he is still living in Lucerne, where he has a home in the most absolute stillness and retirement; adding, in regard to Munich: "Here I am only *en visite*, and I run off the moment the 'entertainment' and 'distraction' become too much for me."

One of these visits was made in March, 1867, for the

purpose of arranging for a model performance of *Lohengrin;* but even on this occasion he did not reside in the city, but remained for a few months in his former villa at Lake Starnberg. *Lohengrin* was to be for the first time given absolutely without cuts, and with the best obtainable cast. Betz came from Berlin, Frau Mayr from Nuremberg, Tichatschek from Dresden; Frl. Mallinger was the Elsa. Rehearsals were held as if the opera had never before been given in Munich. Bülow, who had been temporarily reinstated (and to whom the King had written a flattering letter in the preceding year, regretting that he had been led to give up his place by the calumnious newspaper attacks), worked ten hours a day at these rehearsals, and rumor said that he even slept in the theatre. Everything promised well, but Wagner, of course, was fated not to enjoy the result. This time, strange to say, the disturbance came from the King himself. As Wagner relates, in a letter to Praeger: —

"Tichatschek had displeased him, and he asserted he would never again attend a performance or rehearsal in which that singer took part. As this dislike referred only to the stiff acting of Tichatschek (for he had sung splendidly), I felt that the King's enthusiasm inclined to the spectacular, and where this was defective, he could not elsewhere find compensation. But now comes the outrage. Without consulting me, he ordered Tichatschek and the Ortrud to be sent away. I was, and am, furious, and forthwith mean to quit Munich."

In place of the two artists thus dismissed, two young singers who subsequently won so much fame in Wagnerian rôles, Herr Vogl and Frl. Thoma (later Frau Vogl), made their appearance, consequently the opera did not

suffer. It was received with much enthusiasm, but when Wagner had left, the old cuts were restored. The public was not yet ripe for a complete *Lohengrin;* indeed, no less an authority than Albert Niemann had once asserted that *Lohengrin* without cuts was impossible! The King's action in changing the cast gave rise to all sorts of rumors. Wagner's own explanation is probably the correct one: —

"The *entourage* of the King seemed to have conceived a thorough dislike to Tichatschek. But what is more true, they were, I am convinced, desirous of preventing my appearing with the King, because they feared a demonstration."

The composer returned to Triebschen, where he completed the *Meistersinger* score in October. In more than one respect he was "in clover" at that time. Not only was the King willing and eager to have the new opera produced at once, but its author numbered among his assistants three of the most capable musicians of the century. Hans Richter, who had copied the score at Triebschen, was appointed chorus-master, Hans von Bülow conducted, and Karl Tausig arranged the full score for piano, a task which he accomplished as satisfactorily as Bülow had in the case of *Tristan.* It was not practicable to produce the new opera in the year of its completion, but Hans Richter set to work at once teaching his singers the difficult and important choruses. His conscientiousness and thoroughness may be inferred from this, that no fewer than sixty-six chorus rehearsals were held before the first performance. A slight increase in salary, combined with a growing enthusiasm for the music, made the singers willingly submit to

this unprecedented demand on their time. In his own sphere, Bülow was no less energetic. The orchestra was enlarged to eighty men, some of the older players temporarily replaced by younger ones; and although the remark was made by one in authority regarding Wagner and Bülow that "to these two it does not make the slightest difference if they are obliged to pass over corpses to reach their goal," no fiddler or blower is known to have committed melodic or harmonic suicide on this occasion; nor was the score murdered; on the contrary, when it came to the point of attack, these musicians played as they had never played before. Chorus and orchestra, indeed, were the most perfect factors at the first representations.

An interesting and detailed description of incidents connected with these rehearsals may be found in Nohl's *Neues Skizzenbuch* (350–385). A few points only can be noted here. Bülow, unlike his conservative and indolent predecessor, Lachner, always stood up to conduct. Wagner was omnipresent. In this opera, in which "every step, every nod of the head, every gesture of the arms, every opening of the door, is musically illustrated," it was of supreme importance that a correct tradition should be established, and the Master did his best in this direction by accompanying every bar with the appropriate gestures, which the singers endeavored to copy — endeavored, without always succeeding; for Wagner was a wonderful actor, and if he had had more voice he would have been an interpreter of his own works such as the world has never seen. Nohl specially notes one detail: "He showed Beckmesser at the point where he is finally driven frantic by Sachs's persistent

singing and hammering, how he must suddenly rush at the 'malicious and insolent' cobbler: it was a positively tiger-like, quivering jump which Hölzl had trouble to imitate even partially." Besides Hölzl, the cast included Betz, Nachbaur, Schlosser, Mallinger, and Diez in the rôles of Sachs, Walter, David, Eva, and Magdalena respectively. Of these singers, Mallinger required least interference on Wagner's part. A Viennese feuilletonist, in describing the rehearsals, says: —

"Only when Fräulein Mallinger sings, does Wagner pause occasionally in his directions; he listens with evident pleasure, then walks up and down the stage with short steps, one hand in his trousers' pocket, and finally sits down on the chair beside the prompter's box, nodding his head in a satisfied and pleased way, and smiling all over his face. But if anything in the orchestra displeases him, which happens not infrequently, he jumps up as if a snake had bitten him, claps his hands, and calls to the orchestra, after Bülow has rapped for silence: '*Piano*, gentlemen, *piano!* That must be played softly, softly, softly, as if it came to us from another world!' And the orchestra begins again. 'More softly still,' cries Wagner, with an appropriate gesture; — *so, so, so, gut, gut, gut, sehr schöne.*'"[1]

Among the notabilities who were present during the rehearsals were Dingelstedt, Hülsen, Esser, Eckert, Pasdeloup, Kalliwoda, Niemann, Tichatschek, Kirchner, Tausig, Pauline Viardot Garcia, Turgenieff, Schott, Pohl, Hanslick, G. Engel, etc. In the auditorium there were also some well-known artists who were to judge if the 45,000 florins expended on the scenery had been well utilized. After the last rehearsal the composer delivered an address of thanks to the artists,

[1] The reference is to Eva's words (Act III.), "Einer weise mild und hehr."

embracing several of them, while some of the singers crowded around to kiss his arm or shoulder. Turning finally to the orchestra, he said: "To you I have nothing further to say. We are German musicians; we understand each other without words." Whereat, a joyous commotion.

The first performance was on June 21, 1868. It began at 5.30 and lasted four hours and forty minutes, including intermissions.[1] The house was crowded from pit to gallery, and the King was in his box, to which he had invited Wagner. It was a foregone conclusion that a new work like the *Meistersinger*, in such a performance, before such an audience, would meet with a most cordial reception. The principal numbers were lustily applauded, and at the end of the first act the calls for the composer would not cease. Wagner always disliked showing himself to the public. But on this occasion he could not withdraw, and, at a hint from the King, he got up and bowed. This had the effect of redoubling the applause; but the act itself — a "commoner" bowing from the King's box — was regarded by members of the old "aristocracy" as a dreadful breach of etiquette. A North German paper, instead of rejoicing that a King had been great enough to recognize the royalty of Genius, thus commented on this episode: "The self-assertion, the contempt for public opinion, shown by thus bowing

[1] The music itself lasted four hours and three minutes: first act, one hour seventeen minutes; second, fifty-five minutes; third, one hour fifty-one minutes, according to R. Pohl, who gives these exact data to refute the charges of "excessive length." Although these lengths are official, it must be remembered that repetition makes Wagner-performances more and more *compact*. Mr. Seidl, who is second to none as a Wagner interpreter, has repeatedly conducted this opera (in New York) in a little over three hours and a half with very few serious cuts.

from the so-called *Kaiserloge*, does not redound to the honor either of Wagner or of art!" But apart from this petty incident, the *Meistersinger première* was the most joyful event, the most brilliant success, of Wagner's whole career. A number of repetitions followed, and most of the operatic managers from other cities at once made arrangements for acquiring the right to reproduce the novelty.

STORY OF THE MASTERSINGERS

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries poetry and song in Europe were in the hands of the Troubadours in Provence and the Minnesingers in Germany. They were chiefly knights and other noblemen, kings and princes even being found among their numbers. But in course of time the higher classes lost their interest in such pursuits, and the cultivation of poetry and song was taken up by the artisans in the towns,— the tailors, weavers, shoemakers, and other *Meister*, or "bosses," who formed societies and fostered the *Meistergesang*, in accordance with a large number of fixed, conventional rules of amazing complexity and artificiality. One of the chief seats of these Mastersingers was Nuremberg, which, at the time of the immortal

> Hans Sachs shoe-
> Maker and poet too,

in the middle of the sixteenth century had more than two hundred and fifty of them. Into this picturesque mediæval circle Wagner introduces us in his comic opera.

Act I. The curtain rises on a scene representing the

interior of the St. Catharine's Church in Nuremberg. The congregation is just engaged in singing, to the accompaniment of organ, the last stanza of a stately choral. In one of the last rows of benches is seated Eva, daughter of Pogner, the wealthy goldsmith. Her devotion is sadly disturbed by the young knight, Walther von Stolzing, who is leaning against a neighboring pillar, and whose admiring glances and gestures she does not at all discourage. As the congregation leaves, he finds an opportunity to speak to her, the chaperon Magdalena having been sent back after Eva's handkerchief. Without many preliminaries, the knight confesses his love, but hears to his consternation that Eva is practically betrothed; for on the morrow she is to be bestowed on the Meistersinger who shall, with his song, win the prize at the festival. However, Eva (who, like all of Wagner's heroines, loves as frankly as Juliet) gives him a hint that, happen what may, she will bestow the prize on him or on no one, and leaves with her chaperon; while Walther remains watching the preparations which are being made for an assembly of the Mastersingers. Pending their arrival he gets David, the mischievous apprentice of Hans Sachs, to initiate him into the mysteries and rules of the musical code or "tablature" of these artisan-artists; for he has made up his mind to become a *Meister* too, since only a *Meister* can sue for Eva's hand. David proceeds to tell him at great length how he must master the rules of the tablature with all its prohibitions, and pass through the successive stages of "scholar," "schoolman," and "poet," before he can aspire to be a "mastersinger," that is, one who can set to music his own verses. Walther decides to try for the

"Meister" degree at once, which sublime confidence causes David to exclaim, "O Lena! O Magdalena!"

The Mastersingers arrive at last, to the strains of a pompous march, in groups of two and three. The roll is called, and Pogner announces what Walther had already heard from Eva. The knight now steps forward and begs to be examined for admission into the worthy society; much to the disgust of one of their number, Beckmesser, an old, ugly, conceited, and disagreeable character, who turns out to be his rival for the prize and, what is worse, the critic, or marker, who is to chalk down his errors. To prove his fitness for the desired honor Walther is required to sing a new song, in which, if he deviates more than seven times from the thirty-three rules of the tablature, he has *versungen*, or, to use an Americanism, is "played out." A chair is placed for him on one side, while Beckmesser takes his stand behind a screen, where he is to note down on a blackboard every violation of the rules. Walther sings of nature, love, and women, but long before his delightful song is finished, Beckmesser, who has all the time been scratching away audibly, rushes out angrily and holds up the board, all covered with marks. The Masters agree with him as to the knight's complete fiasco: his song is voted contrary to all traditional forms and usages,— no cadences, no vocal embellishments, and "of melody not a trace." Hans Sachs alone interposes in his favor. He finds the song "new, yet not confused," and cautions his colleagues not to measure by their own rules that of which they have not yet discovered the rules. But, in spite of this, the Masters decide that Walther has outsung himself.

Act II. Characteristic narrow street in old Nuremberg, smelling of feudal times and limiting city-walls. To the left the humble house of Hans Sachs, to the right the more elegant mansion of Pogner. We see and hear first a score of frolicsome apprentices making fun of David, who has been discovered to be in love with Magdalena. Eva has heard that Walther's song was adjudged a failure. She visits Sachs for confirmation of this report. Widower Sachs really has a tender feeling for Eva too, but knows how to repress it. By apparently abusing the knight: "Be a friend still of him before whom we all felt so small?" he provokes Eva's angry resentment and thus discovers, what he had before suspected, that she is in love. Eva returns and meets her lover, who, after a passionate greeting, bitterly denounces the narrow-minded Masters, and then proposes an elopement: the horses are already waiting in front of the city-gates. But Sachs has overheard their rash project and frustrates their departure by opening his shutter and throwing a strong light on the street. The lovers retire behind the bushes in front of Pogner's house. While they are waiting, that grotesque institution of the middle ages (still surviving in some small German towns), the night-watchman, comes up the street, with his spear and lantern, blowing his ox-horn, and proclaiming the hour of the night. This danger past, a more serious one presents itself. Beckmesser, who had announced his intention to serenade Eva (to meet which contingency Magdalena had been requested to don Eva's clothes and appear in the window), comes along to begin operations. To his infinite disgust, Sachs, who still has an eye on the fugitive lovers, at this

moment carries his work-bench in front of the house and begins to hammer away and sing a jovial song about Eve, and how she suffered with her bare feet, after expulsion, till the Lord had his angel make shoes for her. The suspicious knight does not quite catch the drift of the song and thinks that his Eva is being made fun of, but she pacifies him by pointing out that the reference is to another Eve. Beckmesser is more angry still; he entreats, commands Sachs to stop, begins his serenade several times; but Sachs persists in hammering away at the shoes — Beckmesser's shoes; for had not Beckmesser sneered at him in the morning for neglecting his work over his poetry? The shoes must be finished for to-morrow, and he begs Beckmesser to proceed, telling him he will "mark" his faults on the soles with his hammer even as *he* had chalked down the knight's faults on the blackboard. Beckmesser finally decides to pay no more attention to the cobbler, but proceeds with his ludicrous serenade, with its old-fashioned vocal ornaments and turns and twists, to the twangy accompaniment of his lute. The song, combined with Sachs's hammering, finally arouses the neighbors from their slumbers. David comes out, and recognizing the disguised Magdalena looking out of the window to which Beckmesser's song is directed, he attacks the musician and beats him unmercifully. The street is soon filled with apprentices and workmen of all trades, who take sides in the quarrel. The noise is increased by the cries of the women, who are looking out of the windows on the riotous scene below. Suddenly the horn of the watchman is heard, and in a moment the crowd has dispersed. The sudden contrast is most amusing, as the watchman

comes slowly down the street, blowing his immense ox-horn, and solemnly proclaiming the eleventh hour. The curtain drops on an act which abounds in genuine humor, grotesque effects, and telling sarcasm.

Act III. A deeply meditative spirit pervades the introduction to the last act. Hans Sachs sits in his room, reading a large folio and engaged in pessimistic reflections on past events. He is interrupted by David, who comes to congratulate him on his birthday, sings his apprentice song about St. John on the banks of the Jordan, advises his master to marry again, and leaves, glad not to be taken to task for his pugnacious conduct of the preceding night. Walther now enters and tells Sachs a wonderful dream which he had during the night — Walther's melodious prize-song. Sachs carefully notes it down on a slip of paper. Thus, from an unexpected quarter, is the knight equipped for the coming contest. After they have gone to prepare for the festival, Beckmesser enters, finds the paper lying on the table, and quickly puts it in his pocket. A new song by Sachs! There is time left for him to learn it, and with it he must surely win the prize. Sachs returns, discovers the theft, but tells Beckmesser he may keep the poem and use it. The latter rushes out, wild with joy. Eva enters, richly dressed in white. One of her shoes does not quite fit. While Sachs makes it right, Walther returns, and dazzled by the beauty of his expected bride, addresses to her a verse of his song. David and Magdalena also appear, and the scene ends in a quintet.

The scene changes to a wide meadow, with a most imposing view of the whole city of Nuremberg in the background. Boats on the river, floral decorations,

men, women, and children in festive attire, singing and dancing. A chorus of shoemakers sing the praises of St. Crispin, who stole the leather from the rich to make shoes for the poor; the tailors tell of the patriotic feats of one of their number, who was sewed up in a goat-skin, and, by frisking about on the city wall, induced the enemy to raise the siege in despair. The bakers also have their song. At last the Mastersingers come marching along to the sounds of their glorious march. On an eminence quickly constructed with pieces of turf Beckmesser now takes his stand, confused and trembling; but his ill-gotten song is too much for him. His memory fails him, and he is obliged (to use a college phrase) to "crib" several times from his manuscript. Of the text he makes the most ludicrous nonsense, and his melody is a capital parody of an obsolete vocal style with its bombastic embellishments. The people interrupt him several times with exclamations of surprise, and finally his song is drowned by their laughter and cries of derision. Enraged, he throws the manuscript on the ground, and exclaims it is not his — Hans Sachs is the author. Sachs explains that the poem is good, only it must be properly rendered. It is agreed that he who can sing its proper melody shall receive the prize. Walther steps forward, fulfils these conditions, and wins the bride. A jubilant outburst of full orchestra and chorus, with swinging of hats and handkerchiefs, follows, and the curtain drops on this most realistic and lively representation of a German *Volksfest*.

THE POEM AND THE MUSIC

Even this bare outline of the plot must convince the reader that never has there been written a comedy more replete with merry incidents and stirring scenes than the *Mastersingers of Nuremberg*. As a picture of mediæval life it is as realistic, accurate, and delightful as the best of Scott's novels. Two of Wagner's sources of local color, in incident and language, were Wagenseil's *Nürnberger Chronik* (1697) and the works of the prolific cobbler-poet Hans Sachs. Lortzing's opera of *Hans Sachs* may have suggested a few hints for the love-story; but for the rest, *Die Meistersinger* is his own creation. And what a creation! Even without the music it would make a most amusing play. No other poem gives a better idea of his eminently dramatic genius, of his wonderful fertility of invention, his keen eye for theatrical effect, the only serious fault being a tendency to dwell too long on some of the scenes; a tendency which is more objectionable in comedy than in tragedy. Yet it must be remembered that here, as in all of Wagner's operas, many passages that seem unduly spun out do not appear so if the singers are good actors and bring out all the points of the play. Perhaps the best proof of the greatness of this poem lies in the numerous lines it contains that serve for apt citations in everyday situations; many of these will find their way into the dictionaries of familiar quotations.

Instead of calling this Wagner's only comic opera it would perhaps be more accurate to call it satiric; for it is not comic in the exact sense in which some of

Mozart's, Rossini's, and Auber's operas are comic. The humor is essentially German and Wagnerian — a combination of playfulness, exuberant animal spirits, practical jokes, puns, burlesque, and withal an undercurrent of amiability, seriousness, passion, and even sadness, as in all great humorous literature. Every form of humor is represented, the lowest as well as the highest; from the horse-play accompanying the riot scene, the pun on Vogelgesang's name, and the broad burlesque of Beckmesser's serenade, to the more subtle persiflage of Kothner's address, the merry mockery of the apprentices, the quaint spectacle of the watchman, the chivalrous bluster of the knight, the rollicking cobbler songs, and the subtle satire of Sachs. In this variety of humor, from the lowest to the highest, Wagner resembles Shakespeare. Yet there have been commentators who protested they could not see anything funny in this opera. Quite likely. The French have never been able to appreciate Shakespeare's humor; but is that Shakespeare's fault? There is a national taste in jokes as there is an individual taste. George Eliot has said that "there is no greater strain on the affections than a difference of taste in jokes." But a person of refinement and cosmopolitan culture enjoys humor all the more for its local color; does not sneer at a joke because it is French, or English, or German, or because it does not smell of Paris or London or Berlin. For my part, I have not only often enjoyed immensely the drolleries and the sarcasm in *Die Meistersinger*, but I have heard crowded audiences in New York, Berlin, Munich, and Vienna laugh so loudly over its fun that the music was drowned for the moment.

What makes the satire in *Die Meistersinger* the more interesting, is the fact that it has a biographic significance. Wagner himself was fond of dwelling in his essays (especially in the *Communication to my Friends*) on the personal elements that entered into his operas. In the case of his comic opera one must be very obtuse indeed not to be able to read between the lines — and in them — that it is a musical autobiography, just as his Parisian novelettes described his own feelings and trials in the guise of fiction. Of course, Wagner was too much of an artist to mar his drama by too minute elaboration of this biographic element; but in a general way it may be said that Walther, with his novel melodic form, which violates the pedantic rules of the Mastersingers (tune-form), represents the "music of the future"; Beckmesser embodies the ignorant, malicious, and narrow-minded critics who can see no good in anything that is new in art; and the poet, Hans Sachs, represents enlightened public opinion, always ready to appreciate a genius in advance of his professional colleagues. Hans Sachs is the most delightful character in the whole range of operatic literature. His speeches are the most marrowy Wagner has written. When Walther insists on singing his third stanza, at the examination, even though Beckmesser and the other "experts" have already condemned him, Sachs exclaims: —

"Das heiss ich Muth, singt der noch fort!"

("I call that courage; he still sings on") — which brings before us Wagner himself, of whom it has been wittily said that when the critics condemned him for doing a certain thing he replied by "doing it again, only more

so." It should also be noted that although Sachs is the champion of spontaneous genius and novelty in art, he, nevertheless, like the true Wagner (not the mendacious caricature of the critics), insists that the impetuous knight should respect the old masters: "Verachtet mir die Meister nicht." How delightfully, too, the question of the "endless" or "forest melody" is summed up in Sachs's lines: —

> "Nur mit der Melodei
> Seid ihr ein wenig frei;
> Doch sag ich nicht dass das ein Fehler sei:
> Nur ist's nicht leicht zu behalten,
> Und das ärgert uns're Alten!"

In prose: "But with the melody you are a little free; yet would I not call that a fault; only 'tis not easy to remember, and that annoys our old ones."

Yet there is nothing bitter in his treatment of the enemies who are satirized in this opera. It is known that he suffered most acutely from the critical thorns which were incessantly thrust into his heart; nevertheless, when he came to take his revenge, he simply gave the public a chance to see the "Beckmessers" in their true light as unconscious clowns and grotesque fools. There is, besides, a sly point of sarcasm in this, that Beckmesser is made not only Walther's judge, but also his rival, and thus has extra reason to hate him, because he takes away his prize. By way of emphasizing this point I may quote here what Pohl says in another connection: —

> "The mediocre opera-composers are, without exception, Wagner's enemies. . . . Emil Naumann, and his friend, Count von Hochberg, Max Bruch, Carl Reinecke, Abert, Rheinthaler, etc., not to forget Rubinstein, — all are more or less enraged when Wagner is

mentioned in their presence. For Wagner alone is to blame that their operas do not amount to anything. Had Wagner never been, they would be somebodies, while now they are nobodies. Consequently — such is their logic — Wagner is the ruin of art!"

Another amusing actual feature in this comedy is that some of the critics who feel more or less guilty of having once been Beckmessers, still are a little sore on the subject and mercilessly abuse actors who are intelligent enough to treat this part in a real burlesque spirit. But Wagner shows by his whole treatment of this rôle — the blackboard scene, the tuning and twanging of the lute, the grotesque serenade, the antics (musical and mimic) in Sachs's room after the fight, and especially the laughable parody of the prize song on the little stand on the meadow: —

> "Morgen ich leuchte in rosigem Schein,
> Voll Blut und Duft," etc.,

that he intended this character to be essentially a burlesque, and not the doleful, dignified duffer the critics referred to would have it. Wagner even rewrote the mock prize-song and made it more extravagant than before. Beckmesser is naturally a silly fellow, and in this case his pedantry, arrogance, and incompetence are aggravated in such a manner by blinding jealousy that he cannot help making a fool of himself. If he did not make a fool of himself, why should the people laugh at him loudly, and the Masters exclaim: "What does this mean? Can he be crazy?"[1]

[1] Of course the self-burlesque must be unconscious on Beckmesser's part. Wagner wrote to a tenor in 1872: "Be serious throughout. . . . Great pettiness and much gall. Take as a model any captious critic."

Perhaps the most astounding thing about this comic opera is that its music differs from that of the tragic *Tristan* as widely as does the poem. Comparing the two, no one can fail to be struck by the profound originality and extreme range of Wagner's genius. Although, of course, every bar of his music bears his autograph, yet there is hardly anything in the *Meistersinger* that suggests its predecessor, except the deliberate reference of Sachs to the story of Tristan and Isolde, which, of course, evokes from the orchestra a couple of Leading Motives from the *Tristan* score. In *Tristan* all is headlong, impetuous passion, leaving one hardly time to gasp for breath; while *Die Meistersinger* is full of fun and frolic, naïve mirth, sweet simple melody, and brisk, exhilarating rhythms. In its unfathomable wealth of melody this comic opera is a marvel. Surely Mozart was a great melodist, especially in his operas, yet Professor Tappert does not exaggerate when he says that there is more melody in *Die Meistersinger* than in all of Mozart's operas combined. We may also ask: Where, in the whole range of music, is there such a soulful orchestral prelude as that of the third act? Where a more exquisite melody than the prize-song? where a concerted piece of more thrilling beauty than the quintet of the last act? where a more stirring choral than that which opens the opera, or a more glorious chorus than the "Wachet Auf"? And how all these melodies, with scores of others, are interwoven throughout the opera, making the music mirror the poem word by word! Previously to Wagner it was considered the supreme achievement of musical genius to write, not even a whole symphony, but only a single symphonic movement (last-

ing about a quarter of an hour) in such a way that its themes are logically developed and connected; but here we have a *a four-hour symphonic score organically connected in all its parts!* Think how much greater a *genius for form* is required to do this than to write a symphonic movement! and think how much more brains are required to grasp such an achievement, and realize its marvel than to be simply tickled by a string of operatic tunes to the accompaniment of an orchestral guitar!

It would detain us too long to refer even to the principal musical beauties of this score. Herbeck, who conducted this opera when it was first produced in Vienna, said that if Wagner had written nothing but the introduction of the third act, he would have to be classed with the immortal composers. The introduction to the first act is quite as fine in its way, but is much more difficult to interpret properly on account of the constant modification of tempo called for. One of the most fascinating details in the whole score has always been to me that stupendous pedal point which is heard when the congregation leaves church (and generally overlooked in the interest inspired by the flirtation in the foreground) — a long-drawn-out bass note which serves as pivot for a series of superb modulations — resembling a church organ with orchestral sonority and wealth of coloring. In the second act one of the musical gems is Sachs's monologue, when the fragrance of the elder tree, transmuted into tones, is diffused over the whole audience. What colors! what modulations! And how poetically this act closes! A Meyerbeer would have ended it, for "effect," with the noisy mob-scene and "free fight." Not so Wagner. The rise of the moon on the narrow

mediæval street, the appearance of the timid old watchman, with his spear and lantern, while the orchestra wafts zephyrs of fragrant reminiscences over the auditorium, is an episode which alone would stamp its creator as the most imaginative and poetic of modern dramatists.

The realism and "local color" of the scenes in which this watchman appears are greatly heightened if he blows a real ox-horn (instead of having his part blown on a trombone, as was done at first in Vienna and in New York). The tones of the real ox-horn contrast most delightfully with the gossamer moonlight harmonies which follow in the orchestra, and Wagner was even more solicitous about this horn than about Beckmesser's having the real twangy lute prescribed (for which all sorts of substitutes have been used, including a harp with paper between the strings). To Eckert in Berlin he wrote (Luzern, 1870): —

"I beg you most insistently to see that a real ox-horn in G flat is provided for the watchman. This is indispensable and imperative for a unique, important effect." In a letter to Herbeck, he notes the drastic effect produced by this scene in Munich, adding pointedly: "When I prescribe such a thing, I know what I am about, and if you had been in Munich, you would have been convinced that the effect I here attain with the natural horn is very pertinent, and necessary to make the situation clear."

THE CHORUS IN WAGNER'S OPERAS

It was Wagner's opinion that *Die Meistersinger*, more than any other drama of his, would appeal to non-German audiences. This opinion time has verified. In England, Italy, Belgium, it has been the first of all the later music-dramas to be selected for acclimatization. Nor is

it difficult to account for this. *Die Meistersinger* might be called the *Lohengrin* of the Third Period. It is true that in the treatment of the voices and the orchestra, in instrumental coloring, and especially in the constant ingenious use of Leading Motives the *Meistersinger* score does not differ from that of its immediate predecessor; but in other respects it resembles *Lohengrin* rather than *Tristan;* especially by its abundant choruses, lyric episodes, and pompous processions. How are we to account for this contrast between *Die Meistersinger* and *Tristan?* The difference in subjects, one being comic, the other tragic, does not explain it, for *Lohengrin*, too, is tragic. The problem is as deep as it is interesting, and its solution will throw a bright light on the evolution of Wagner's genius.

In the chapter entitled "How Wagner Composed" we saw that he usually conceived his musical ideas simultaneously with his verses. Now we know that the plot of *Die Meistersinger* was sketched and written out in the same month as the sketch of *Lohengrin*, and even preceding the latter. This plot was not seriously modified when — fifteen years later — the verses were written out in Paris. May we not assume, in view of the juvenile character of many of the *Meistersinger* melodies (especially in the third act), that these melodies did not wait for the verses, but crowded into Wagner's mind in that fertile period while he was sketching the mere outlines of the plot in the Bohemian forest? There is nothing improbable in this supposition, but in the absence of any direct hints to this effect in the composer's essays or letters, it must stand as a mere guess. At the same time there is another and a still more suggestive way of

explaining the resemblance in the "popular" character of *Lohengrin* and *Die Meistersinger*.

I am convinced that *Lohengrin* owes its popular international success in part to the fact that Wagner, disgusted and alarmed by the frigid reception of the *Dutchman* and *Tannhäuser*, made a deliberate effort to meet the public half-way, not by concessions and inconsistencies, but by widening his principles sufficiently to take in some popular operatic elements and weld them with his own dramatic style. The same, I suspect, is true of the *Meistersinger*. Discouraged by the inability to complete his Tetralogy without interruption, and still more by failure of all efforts to bring out his *Tristan* until seven years after its completion, he was once more in the mood for a reconciliation such as he had been in when composing *Lohengrin*. It was the easier to give himself up to this mood, as it harmonized with a change in his musico-dramatic principles. He has nowhere in his writings confessed this change; but practice is more convincing than theory: the scores of *Die Meistersinger* and *Parsifal* — the last two of his works to be planned in detail — are more eloquent proof of the recantation than any theoretical treatise could be.

This recantation relates to the use of ensemble pieces — duos, trios, etc., and especially, of choruses. We know that in the first two periods, ending with *Rienzi* and with *Lohengrin* respectively, Wagner made use of the chorus, like other opera-composers, and, in the latter case, surpassed them all on their own ground, not only as regards the musical grandeur of his ensembles, but by the conscientious dramatic use he made of them — not dragging the choristers in by the hair whenever he thought

it was time for a *musical* climax, but providing a real *raison d'être* for their presence in the *dramatic* plot. But in the years of theoretical reflection immediately following *Lohengrin* he came to the conclusion that even under these conditions there was no proper use for the chorus in a music-drama. He reasoned (IV. 130–134) that only individualities can arouse our sympathy; masses may stun (*verblüffen*), but cannot interest us. The chorus gradually disappeared from the Greek drama; there is none in the Shakespearian drama; *ergo* there should be none in the music-drama; *ergo* Wagner did not make any special use of it in his five works next following, — the four *Nibelung* dramas and *Tristan*.

This reasoning seems logical, and the practice certainly was consistent with the conclusion arrived at. But there was a flaw in the argument. It is not true that masses can only "stun" and not dramatically interest us. The thrilling effects produced by the Meiningen company in such plays as *Julius Cœsar* and *Die Hermannsschlacht* prove the contrary. Moreover, choruses can interest us *musically* — very much so, indeed; and this is what Wagner forgot for the moment. His mind was in a state of reaction; he was disgusted with the unscrupulous manner in which his predecessors in the opera had sacrificed the drama to musical purposes. The chorus seems to necessitate undramatic repetition of words; moreover, when fifty or more sing the same words, no one can understand them: consequently the chorus must go, in the interest of the drama; all the more as the symphonic orchestra, with its definite Leading-Motive-language, now takes the place of the moralizing and commenting Greek chorus.

Here, again, Wagner overlooks an important fact. Granted that the chorus cannot be properly understood, why should it not be used as *an integral part of the orchestra*, for variety of color, and the attainment of a massive climax, deriving its eloquence, like the orchestra itself, from the use of Leading Motives? Wagner allowed the pendulum to swing too far in the direction of the drama, and in doing so overlooked the fact that in a music-drama music has its special claims as well as the drama.

But, as I have said, he saw his error in time to let two of his most mature works benefit by his change of view. And besides, if we look at the matter closely, we find that in reality only two of his dramas are entirely without chorus and ensemble-songs, — *Rheingold* and *Siegfried*. *Siegfried* does not need any, but *Rheingold* would have doubtless benefited by the musical utilization of the chorus which co-operates in the drama. Even *Tristan* has a chorus; true, it sings only a few bars, but when they are lustily sung they produce a splendid effect. In the *Walküre* we have the weird and thrilling chorus of the war-maidens; in *Götterdämmerung* the manly chorus of Hagen's followers; in *Parsifal* a delightful variety of choral music, supplied by the knights and the flower maidens. Of concerted pieces, too, there are some choice specimens in this strict theoretical period — think of the glorious trios of the Rhine maidens in *Rheingold* and *Götterdämmerung*, the love-duos in *Walküre* and *Siegfried*, and find anything to equal them in other operas if you can. As for the quintet in the *Meistersinger*, few would deny that it dwarfs every other quintet ever written. The same is true of the superb choruses in this opera. Where will you find

anything to match the opening choral (with the exquisitely amorous orchestral interludes depicting the flirtation), the merry gambols of the apprentices, the humorous songs of the tailors, bakers, and cobblers, and especially the glorious "Wachet auf" at the close? Here the *vox populi* is indeed divine![1]

BECKMESSER CRITICISMS

It was a lucky circumstance that no less a man than Hans Richter supervised the choral forces in this opera, where they play so great a rôle. The sixty-six separate rehearsals on which he had insisted ensured absolute perfection of the choral parts, and this had much to do with the enthusiasm aroused at the first performances in Munich. Even the local critics were carried off their feet for the moment, and could not but admit that the opera was a popular success. It was born under a lucky star. While *Tristan* had had to wait seven years for a performance, and remained for a decade longer confined to Munich, *Die Meistersinger* had been put on the stage eight *months* after its completion and at once made its way to various cities; to Dresden, Dessau, Karlsruhe, Mannheim, Weimar, within the following year (1869), and in 1870 to Hanover, Vienna, Könisberg, and even Berlin, with other cities. The critics thus had an early opportunity to have their "say," and they made the best use of it, their unconscious mission being, as usual, to amuse future generations.

[1] The mob scene at the close of the second act is the greatest polyphonic marvel ever written. It is amazingly difficult, and Ehlert, thinking it impossible, urged its omission and a resort to dumb-show. But I have heard this "impossible" scene sung to perfection many a time. Ehlert's advice is absurd.

One of the best-known German critics, Otto Gumprecht, said of the Introduction to *Die Meistersinger* that it was "a vicious kind of polyphony, *poisoned counterpoint*" (!) and speaks further of "this ugly rioting of dissonances that make one's hair stand on end, this brutal terrorism of the brass." According to Ferdinand Hiller the riot scene is "the craziest assault ever made on art, taste, music, and poetry." "'Brutal' is the only correct word for this scene," wrote our old friend Dorn. The periodical *Europa* pronounced the opera "a dramatico-musical humbug." The Berlin *Montagszeitung* called it "the most horrible caterwauling that could be devised," and compares the effect to that which would be produced if all the organ-grinders in Berlin played at the same time in the Circus Renz, each a different tune. *Echo* refers to the "voice-murdering part of Hans Sachs." Another paper calls the score "a boundless desert." Dr. J. Castan said that a single cavatina in Rossini's *Barber* was worth more than Wagner's whole score, and he was exceedingly angry with the composer for "daring" to introduce Rossini's "Di tanti palpiti" in the bleating chorus of the tailors.[1]

Let us now hear what Dr. Eduard Hanslick, Beckmesser of Musical History at the University of Vienna, has to say about Richard Wagner's *Meistersinger*: —

The Introduction is "a musical product of painful artificiality, and positively brutal in its effect." "Pogner's address falls like a ray of sunlight into the tediously dismal musical mist that before

[1] Tappert chronicles this conversation in a German library, 1868. Visitor: "Have you Wagner's *Meistersinger*?" Librarian: "No, sir! I could never assume the responsibility of purchasing such rubbish. If we had money to throw away, I would put a copy in the reading-room as a warning example."

it prevailed alone." The dialogue between Sachs and Eva "as a whole is painfully monotonous and ponderous." Sachs's cobbler song (Jerum, Jerum) is "alleged to be comic, but suggests an infuriated hyena rather than a merry cobbler." Sachs's joke (hammering on the soles) ends by being "infinitely insipid." The riot scene at the end of the second act becomes, on the stage, "a truly brutal shouting and noise." Sachs's "Wahn" monologue, but for a few interesting details, "would expose us to the danger of falling asleep." Even the melodious quintet owes its effect entirely to the fact that no other ensemble music has been heard so long: "in any other opera it would not have excited such uncommon attention." "The most serious defect is Wagner's absolute lack of humor."

"In the expression of the comic, in particular, Wagner's music is thoroughly unfortunate; it becomes here regularly inflated, overladen, aye disagreeable." The mob scene is "not comic but only ugly and vulgar." In this opera the "vocal part in itself is not only something incomplete, but *nothing at all.*" And, worst of all, there is absolutely no form in the score. It is "a boneless tone-mollusc." It is "the deliberate dissolution of all definite form into a formless, sensually-intoxicating mass of sound, the substitution for independent organic melodies of a formless, vague melodizing."

JENSEN, DRESDEN, AND VIENNA

Compare with these utterances of a professional Philistine the impression produced by the same opera on a man of genius — one who would have ranked among the highest, had not an early death snatched him away. Adolf Jensen heard this opera in Munich and wrote to a friend: "I do not attempt to describe to you the impression it made upon me. It is indescribable. During the first act the tears incessantly trembled in my eyes, and all my veins throbbed." Jensen was inspired by his impressions to attempt a comic opera of his own;

but he was already too much weakened by consumption to undertake such a task. He went to Dresden, where he almost killed himself by his efforts to promote the performances of Wagner's comic opera. In a letter to Ehlert he speaks of the cabals formed against it there: —

"As I can see everywhere, great efforts are being made to secure a failure for the opera — if it succeeds in spite of these, it will be due to the convincing truth and power of the music, and such an unsuspected success would be a painful surprise to certain persons."

Jensen "did his utmost to teach the artists, wrote letters to everybody he thought he could influence, played and sang the score from beginning to end to everybody he could get to listen to him," as a biographer of his relates. And success was his reward. Over five thousand orders came in for the first night, and *Die Meistersinger* soon became a favorite in Dresden although at that time the performance was much inferior to that in Munich.

Two more citations from Jensen's letters may be made by way of showing Wagner's profound influence on his genius. Concerning his opera 40, 41, he says: "In these songs you will seek in vain for the former gushing, vanished Jensen. Earth grips me once more. My great venerated master, Richard Wagner, lies deep at the bottom of my heart." In 1870 he secured a copy of *Tristan*, and "for eight days," he writes, "I rioted in ecstasy over it without getting to the end of the first act." [1]

[1] It is often said that Wagner will never form a school. Fudge! All the younger composers belong to the Wagner "school" in modulation, melody, and instrumentation, even if they do not write music-dramas

It would take too much space to follow the adventures of *Die Meistersinger* through the various German and foreign cities. Brief reference must, however, be made to the performances at Vienna, because we possess in the Herbeck biography a full and most interesting account of it, including several long and valuable letters by Wagner, from which I have already quoted. Johann Strauss (who, by the way, is another genius who at least in instrumentation also belongs to the Wagner "school") had been the first, in 1853, to introduce fragments from *Lohengrin* in Vienna, and he it was also who first played *Meistersinger* fragments in that city. When the opera itself was under rehearsal, the usual anti-Wagnerian rumors were circulated. One of these was: "The opera is so difficult that the director will be obliged to give it up at the last moment." Another: "The music is of a nature which makes a failure seem inevitable; the very first chord of the overture is false." There was a clique in the audience which attempted to imitate the Paris Jockey Club with hisses, whistling, and howling, the consequence being that, as Herbeck telegraphed to the composer (among other things): "Close of second act not yet properly heard by any one because of colossally enthusiastic applause mingled with hisses." But

with leading motives. The later Jensen is of the Wagner "school." All the French composers of to-day have been influenced by Wagner. So has the Norwegian Grieg, who is a great admirer of Wagner, and who wrote a special account of the Bayreuth festival in 1876. The Bohemian Dvorák, as a young man, followed about Wagner in Prague with a veneration like that which Wagner felt towards Weber; and it is on him that Wagner's mantle of gorgeous orchestral coloring has fallen. To-day it is almost impossible to take up an opera or orchestral score without noting the effect of Wagner's "schooling" in harmony and orchestration.

on subsequent evenings the opposition disappeared. Wagner would have been willing to coöperate, but he had not been officially invited, as the management feared that the disturbances might be increased by his presence. Nor was he needed, at least for present purposes. Eleven performances were given in rapid succession; whereupon the opera was shelved for a long time; and why? Because the Hans Sachs, Beck, had turned Beck-messer. He measured Wagner's art by his own powers, declared that further singing of his rôle would ruin his voice; and there was no one to take his place.

FROM MUNICH TO BAYREUTH

RHEINGOLD AND WALKÜRE IN MUNICH

AFTER the *Meistersinger* had been launched at Munich, Wagner returned to Lucerne and took up again the twice-interrupted composition of *Siegfried*, with the intention of completing the last of the four dramas, too, as soon as possible, and then attempting, with the King's assistance, to give the Nibelung Festival. But the King was an insatiable and impatient Wagnerite. The *Götterdämmerung* would take some time to compose, and in the meantime His Majesty was anxious to hear the two dramas that had so long been awaiting performance — *Rheingold* and *Walküre*. Wagner finally had to yield to his desires, and, much against his own wish, gave up his *Rheingold* score to Intendant Perfall. Most unfortunately, it soon appeared. The King had given written orders that *Rheingold* should be conscientiously placed on the stage in exact accordance with Wagner's directions, and the unprecedented sum of 60,000 florins had been expended on the scenery. But the Intendant had given the job into such incompetent hands that when it came to the rehearsals the complicated machinery was found not only far from what Wagner intended it to be, but practically useless. Indeed, the eminent Hessian stage machinist Brandt, on consultation, declared that it

could not be even improved but would have to be made anew to answer its purposes. Under these circumstances Hans Richter, who had been chosen Kapellmeister (Bülow having again resigned), refused to conduct; for which act of "insubordination" he was suspended, while at the same time Intendant von Perfall handed in his resignation, declaring that either he or Richter must go. Or, as his newspaper organ[1] put it: —

"Von Perfall gave this alternative: either to have that influence broken for good or to go himself. . . . So important an art institute as the Munich Court Opera must not any longer — such is public opinion — be made the playground of boundless wilfulness, intriguing presumption, and boyish vainglory, such as the satellites of the new Great Koptha show."

Hans Richter, on his part, wrote a long letter to a local paper,[2] which is one of those manly, eloquent documents that carry conviction in every line. He shows up Perfall's conduct in its true light, and says of the rehearsals (Betz, Schlosser, and Frau Stehle were in the cast): —

"The most annoying incidents occurred. The frantic joy of those who desired a failure, the hopeless despondency of those who were equally anxious of success, will forever remain engraven in the memory of all concerned." He ends his letter with these words in explanation of his refusal to conduct: "I am convinced that I have herein behaved by no means as 'a Wagnerian music-director,' as the Intendant's organ asserts, but simply as a man of honor, who would rather sacrifice his position than his artistic conviction."

A worthy disciple of his master. After Richter's resignation the direction of *Rheingold* was successively

[1] *Allgemeine Zeitung*, Sept. 11, 1869.
[2] Reprinted in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Sept. 24, 1869.

offered to Lassen, Bülow, Klindworth, and Saint-Saëns, all of whom refused. It was finally accepted by Wüllner, and a few very crude performances were given. Many well-known persons were among the spectators, including Liszt, Klindworth, Seroff, Sgambati, Langhans, Pasdeloup, Mendès, Saint-Saëns, Brassin, Leroy, Holmes, Draeseke, Joachim, Viardot-Garcia, Bache, Dannreuther, etc. Hanslick came from Vienna and prophesied in his report that no other opera-house would ever again produce this worthless and expensive work! Wagner's attitude in this matter is shown in these lines from a public letter addressed by him to the *Allgemeine:* —

"That my refusal to coöperate personally was not the consequence of an 'elaborate intrigue against the Intendant,' I proved by the fact that when the evil results of this conductor-less undertaking became manifest, I hastened to Munich, not to secure for my work an adequate performance, which was impossible, but one sufficient to save the honor of the Intendance."

The date of the first performance was Sept. 22. In the following summer, June 26, 1870, the *Walküre,* with Vogl and his wife as Siegmund and Sieglinde, was given, with musical results not very much better than those that attended *Rheingold;* for the composer not only refused to have anything more to do with the Munich Opera, but even declined to advise the Intendant regarding a conductor and other matters. Wüllner conducted again, but he had not had, like Richter, the advantage of studying the score with the composer; he dragged the *tempi* so much that the drama lasted half an hour longer than it should have lasted. Nevertheless, the reception of this work was enthusiastic, although there

were some hisses mingled with the plaudits. The innovation of a lowered orchestra (partially after Wagner's plans), which had been introduced at the *Rheingold* performance, benefited the *Walküre* also.[1] The usual parody, of course, made its appearance, under the title of *Keingold* (No gold). Regarding the issue of these Munich performances, Wagner himself says (IX. 373), "I have not learned the details, as my friends understood that my feelings must be spared."

SECOND MARRIAGE AND SIEGFRIED IDYL

The marriage of Hans von Bülow to Cosima Liszt had not been a happy one. In a letter dated 1864 Wagner referred to it as "tragic," as the reader will remember. The two were divorced in the autumn of 1869, and on Aug. 25, 1870, Cosima was married to Wagner. There were difficulties to overcome, involving the necessity of a change of religious profession on the part of the woman. In the meantime Wagner followed the example of Liszt, of Goethe, and other European men of genius — an example the ethics of which this is not the place to discuss. Some of his friends apparently did not approve of his second marriage, as may be inferred from this brief note to Praeger, dated July, 1870: "You will no doubt be angry with me when you hear that I am soon to marry Bülow's wife, who has become a convert in order to be divorced." More light on the situation is thrown by these extracts from a letter to Frau Wille, dated June 25, 1870: —

[1] Fuller accounts of these *Rheingold* and *Walküre* performances may be found in Pohl's volume of essays.

"Certainly we shall come, for you are to be the first to whom we shall present ourselves as man and wife. To get into this state, great patience was required: what has been for years inevitable, was not to be brought about until after all manner of suffering. Since last I saw you in Munich, I have not again left my asylum, which, in the meanwhile, has also become the refuge of her who was destined to prove that I could well be helped, and that the axiom of many of my friends, that I 'could not be helped' was false! She knew that I could be helped, and has helped me: she has defied every disapprobation and taken upon herself every condemnation. She has borne to me a wonderfully beautiful and vigorous boy, whom I could boldly call 'Siegfried': he is now growing, together with my work, and gives me a new, long life, which at last has attained a meaning. Thus we got along without the world, from which we had retired entirely. . . . But now listen: you will, I trust, approve of the sentiment which leads us to postpone our visit until I can introduce to you the mother of my son as my wedded wife. This will soon be the case, and before the leaves fall we hope to be in Mariafeld."

It was in honor of Siegfried, and to celebrate his mother's birthday, that Wagner wrote his exquisite Siegfried Idyl. It was composed secretly, and the first performance was a surprise to Cosima. Hans Richter brought the necessary musicians from Zürich and rehearsed the piece with them at Lucerne. On the morning of the birthday the musicians placed themselves on the steps of the villa at Triebschen, Wagner conducted, and Richter took the trumpet part. It was a serenade such as no other mortal has ever been honored with. The Siegfried Idyl is a piece not only of ravishing musical beauty, but it breathes a spirit of refinement, of delicacy, of tenderness which alone would suffice to refute all the aspersions on Wagner's character; no one but a man whose inmost nature is love and kindness

could have penned such an Idyl. And with such simple means too! If Wagner, in his tragedies, asks for an orchestra of from sixty to one hundred, he has his reasons for it. In the Siegfried Idyl he has shown that he can write music as tender and melodious as Schubert's, and as full of the most exquisite color as any part of his own music-dramas, with a diminutive orchestra consisting only of strings, woodwind, one trumpet, and two horns.

The principal themes are taken from the *Siegfried* score, which he was completing at that time; these he turns over and over in various combinations and colors till they flash and sparkle like a string of gems. An old German cradle-song, *Schlafe Kindchen*, is also used as a theme. The innocence and happiness of child life have never been mirrored as in this Idyl. It is not merely an orchestral cradle-song; it is the embodiment of love, paternal and conjugal. But how few conductors and orchestras are able to bring out all the tenderness, beauty, and color of this simple piece! It was not originally intended for publication, and for a number of years the composer reserved it as a special treat for his personal friends. In 1878 the score was published by Schott, with Frau Cosima's permission.

SCHOPENHAUER AND WAGNER

Why is fame and even subsistence usually denied to men of genius by their contemporaries? To this question Professor Lombroso replies in his work *The Man of Genius:* "The reason is that . . . men of genius are lacking in tact, in moderation, in the sense of practical

life, in the virtues which alone are useful in social affairs." At the period we have now reached, Richard Wagner gave repeated evidence of such lack of tact and moderation. When his *Meistersinger* was making its way across Germany, and when it would have been wise to keep his opinions in the background and let that glorious music plead for him, what does he do but reprint his old pamphlet on *Judaism in Music*, with aggravating additions, although he knew that the German press was practically in the hands of the Jews; and shortly afterwards he launched his pamphlet *On Conducting*, which is a variation on the same theme — a criticism of the Jewish Mendelssohnian way of interpreting the German classics. It was a courageous thing to do, but unwise from his personal point of view; for he must have known that the storm of protestation aroused by his action would take the course of renewed attacks on his music, his theories, and his personality. The violence of this storm may be inferred from the fact that, according to Glasenapp, at least 170 replies to the *Judaism* pamphlet were published. It is true that Wagner could have had no idea that his new pamphlets would start such a cyclone, since most of their predecessors had been received in almost complete silence. But there is no reason to believe that he would have acted otherwise had he expected the tornado. Reformers are never diplomatic.

An essay of quite another sort followed, in the month after his marriage — the remarkable treatise on Beethoven (IX. 77–151), which was written as a contribution to the celebration of the centenary of that composer's birth. On the glowing tributes to Beethoven's genius contained

therein we need not dwell; what interests us here is that in this essay Wagner formally accepts Schopenhauer's Philosophy of Music and unfolds it at some length. Strange fact; for Schopenhauer was an ignoramus in music, and most of his opinions were diametrically opposed to Wagner's. We might sum up the whole matter in one sentence: The flute was his pet instrument and Rossini his favorite composer. Here are a few of his funny opinions: —

"Melody is the kernel of music, to which harmony is related as gravy to roast meat" (which is true of Rossini, but not of great music). "The longest duration of an opera should be two hours." "The contemptuous indifference with which Rossini often treats the text is, if not laudable, at any rate genuinely musical." "Poetry of a concise style, full of esprit and ideas, is not suited for operatic purposes, because the composition cannot reach up to it."

How could Wagner plant the banner of such a musical philosopher on his Beethoven essay? Because Schopenhauer has a metaphysical theory regarding the nature and essence of music which naturally meets with the approval of a musician. According to the great pessimist, music stands apart from all other arts, and above them. For they mirror only the visible phenomena of the world, whereas music reveals to us that which underlies all phenomena, the Will, the *Ding an sich*, the Unknowable, or whatever other name metaphysicians choose to give it. Other arts, he says, give us only shadows, while music gives us the essence. The language of music is intelligible everywhere, just as are the emotional cries of anguish or joy. These metaphysical speculations, the crude psychology of which this is not the place to expose, Wagner adopts and enlarges upon,

combining them with Schopenhauer's unscientific and ridiculous somnambulism-and-nightmare-speculations, and with their aid endeavors to explain the phenomena of musical inspiration and Beethoven's genius in particular. Fortunately only a portion of his Beethoven essay is devoted to such nebulous stuff; the rest of it is very suggestive and valuable reading matter; especially the remarks on musical form, on the emotional characteristics of Beethoven's symphonies, and on the sublime *versus* the beautiful.

Apart from the fundamental metaphysical doctrine just referred to, there is absolutely no point of musical contact between Schopenhauer and Wagner. In the poems, too, the influence of Schopenhauer is much less apparent than the commentators have assumed. The letter to Liszt in which he first "enthuses" over his discovery of Schopenhauer is dated at a time when the Nibelung poems were already written. In *Tristan*, as we have seen, there is less of Schopenhauer than of pantheism, which that philosopher, in fact, repudiates. In the *Meistersinger* the "Wahn" monologue of Sachs might perhaps be referred to a page (II. 693) of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, but that is a mere trifle. Schopenhauer's principal idea — the Negation of the Will to Live — was not new to Wagner (see No. 168 of the Liszt letters), and the only point in which Schopenhauer's influence seems really conspicuous is the ethical idea of Pity, which underlies *Parsifal* ("Through Pity enlightened, the guileless fool"), although in Brünnhilde's conduct we had before met with this ethical motive in a dramatic form. In Letter 190 to Liszt Wagner gives a synopsis of Schopenhauer's views on Pity, the Negation

of the Will, etc., which would ensure any college senior a high mark in an examination in the history of philosophy; but it has not the directness and vivid imagery of the original, or of his own writings on music and the drama. In philosophy Wagner was almost as much of an amateur as Schopenhauer was in music; and the disposition which is at present being shown by some fanatic admirers in Germany to worship him as a great philosopher, is absurd.

What did Schopenhauer think of Wagner? When, in 1854, Wagner printed a few copies of the Nibelung poems for private circulation, a copy was sent to Schopenhauer, who refers to it in a letter to Frauenstedt[1] as

"a book from Richard Wagner, which is not in the market, but was printed for friends only, on superb thick paper, and neatly bound; it is called the *Ring des Nibelungen*, is a series of four operas which he intends some day to set to music, — probably the real art-work of the future; appears to be very fantastic; have read only the Vorspiel: shall continue. No letter with it, but only the dedication *From Admiration and Gratitude*."

A few years ago a Berlin journalist came across this copy and found a considerable number of pencil marks in it, suggesting improvements (Wagner himself made many changes in the revised version) and objecting to certain archaic and musical expressions; for Schopenhauer was a most pedantic purist in linguistic matters, and forgot, or did not know, that Goethe uses such archaic expressions much more freely than Wagner, although in a music-drama they are very much more justifiable than in a purely literary poem. One awk-

[1] *Memorabilien*, p. 636.

ward word leads him to comment: "He has no ears, the deaf musician." He objects to the close of the first act of *Die Walküre*, and wrote after the words "The curtain drops quickly" "*Denn es ist hohe Zeit.*" *Siegfried* has the fewest marks, and as a whole the poems seem to have impressed him favorably; for, as Wagner one day exclaimed to Frau Wille, whose husband met Schopenhauer every year at Frankfurt: —

"Do you remember the greeting he once brought me from Schopenhauer? 'Tell your friend Wagner that I thank him for his book, but he should give up music; he has more genius for poetry. I, Schopenhauer, remain faithful to Rossini and Mozart.' Do you fancy," added Wagner, "that I bore the philosopher any grudge for this?"

He did not; indeed, in this matter he showed himself the greater man of the two: he was able to appreciate Schopenhauer, which was more than Schopenhauer could do for him.

A FOOLISH LIBRETTO

One of the weak points of Wagner's character was his inclination to meddle with politics. One would have thought that his Dresden experiences, resulting in almost thirteen years' banishment from the only country where his art could have prospered at the time, might have cured him of that weakness. But no! He must "put his foot into it" again, and make France as impossible for himself as he had previously made Germany. In 1868 he wasted some of his precious time on a tedious essay of over a hundred pages, entitled *German Art and German Politics* (VIII. 41–158). The fact that it first appeared as a series of feuilleton articles in a newspaper

founded by his friend Roeckel, partly accounts for its rambling character. It contains a few lucid and suggestive pages, but as a whole none but a robust German stomach could digest its turgid, metaphysical phraseology; besides, it touches on questions of state, church, school, etc., which had only a local and temporary interest. The principal theme of the essay, however, is an attack on France, or rather on the subjugation of Germany by French taste. He shows how the French form of civilization had prevailed for centuries in Germany, where it was exclusively fostered by the princes, while German literature and art languished and owed their very existence only to the heroic efforts of a few men of genius. This French influence Wagner objects to and pleads that an original German civilization should take its place. In his main position he was no doubt right; the French fashions and the French ways as copied by the Germans necessarily resulted in a mere caricature, and he knew that the Germans were capable of something better if they would only try to be *original.* But in some of the details he allowed his pen to run away with his tact in a way that might have angered the French had they been likely to read such a rambling and ponderous essay. His incidental remarks on *Faust,* for instance, made Gounod his mortal enemy, although, if Gounod had been able to read German, he might have seen that these remarks were aimed not so much at his music as at the libretto, of which Berlioz, too, has said that "it destroys admirable musical situations which one ought to have invented if Goethe himself had not invented them."

The subject of this essay was evidently still ferment-

ing in Wagner's brain, when two years later the German army besieged Paris. At last there was a hope that if Germany should win in the war she would throw off her artificial imitation of the French in art and manners. In the joy which this thought inspired he hastily wrote down, in a very few days, towards the end of 1870, the libretto for a musical burlesque *à la* Offenbach which he called *A Capitulation* (IX. 7–50). A young musician who had promised to set it to music, seemed relieved when the libretto was refused by the theatre managers. And, indeed, it deserved such a rebuff, for it is one of the stupidest libretti ever concocted, and it seems almost incredible that the author of that masterwork of humor, *Die Meistersinger*, should have penned it. The characters are Victor Hugo, Jules Favre, Ferry, Simon, Gambetta, Offenbach, Perrin, etc. Balloons play a great rôle in the piece; one of the choruses consists of monstrous rats which are afterwards changed into ballet girls. The quality of the jokes may be inferred from this pun: Mottu cries "a present: jurez!" to which Keller replies, "Schuré is not here." At the close, Victor Hugo has a long address in which he declares that "as enemies you shall not take Paris, but we will make you a present of it" — of its cafés, restaurants, bal Mabille, Mystères de Paris, poudre de riz, chignons, etc. In the last chorus the Intendants of the German theatres take part; they dance awkwardly, and are laughed at. And of such silly things the whole burlesque is made up.

Obviously, as an imitator of Offenbach's librettists Wagner was no more successful than Offenbach himself would have been as the composer of *Parsifal*. At the same time it must be said that, foolish as Wagner's

libretto is, it is not half as foolish as the fuss which the French chauvinists made over it for more than twenty years. Just as a lot of ill-bred members of the "aristocracy" in 1861 prevented Paris from hearing *Tannhäuser*, so during the twenty-one years following the appearance of *A Capitulation* every effort to produce another Wagner opera in Paris was frustrated by a band of gamins and chauvinists, in spite of protests by all reasonable people, by the united Press, and the declaration of the *Figaro* that such conduct was evidence not of patriotism but of *patriotitis*. How the Parisians were meanwhile hungering for a Wagner opera may be inferred from the eloquent fact that when *Lohengrin* was finally produced at the Grand Opéra, under police protection, on Sept. 16, 1891, it attained, in the course of the first year (ending Sept. 15, 1891), as many as sixty-one performances, the highest receipts being 23,000 francs, the lowest 14,300, and the total 1,097,320 francs and 51 centimes.[1] If the Grand Opéra took in $219,464 in one year, with one of Wagner's operas, how much has it lost by waiting exactly half a century, from the first performance, before it listened to one of these operas?[2] All this loss in money and pleasure was occasioned by the foolish *Capitulation*, the chief point of which, moreover, — and this is the only amusing part of the whole farce, — was directed not against the French, but against the Germans, especially the German theatre-managers! As Wagner himself remarks in the preface: —

[1] These figures are official. I owe them to the courtesy of the Direction des Beaux Arts.

[2] Apart from the eleven inadequate performances of *Rienzi* given in 1869 by Pasdeloup (and which were followed by a parody *Rien*).

"My subject touches on no other side of the French than one by the illumination of which we Germans are really mirrored in a much more ridiculous light than the French, who, in all their follies, are at least original, whereas we, in our disgusting imitation of them, sink far below the level of the ludicrous."

In regard to the charge of meanness in aiming such a burlesque at a fallen enemy, it must be remembered that it was written during the siege, before its issue was decided. Moreover, as Servières remarks, the raillery concerns chiefly the government of the Défense Nationale, adding: —

"It would have been truly too much to ask of a stranger to whom we had, in a very disgraceful manner, given cause of complaint against us, more reserve and good taste than of an editor of the *Figaro* or the *Vie parisienne*. Thus what was legitimate in a frivolous French paper became monstrous, ignoble, and revolting under the pen of an insulted German, exalted by the triumph of his countrymen."[1]

KAISERMARSCH AND FOREIGN CONQUESTS

Great as was Wagner's patriotism, it did not lead him to magnify the merits of things German unduly. He cheerfully conceded the superiority of the *Marseillaise* to the *Watch on the Rhine* as a patriotic song; indeed, he expressed his surprise that the German army should have returned again and again for inspiration to what he calls a rather commonplace song — *ein ziemlich flaues Lieder-*

[1] There are some other very sensible remarks on this topic in Servières's *Wagner Jugé en France*, a book which gives a much more interesting account of Wagner's relations to France than Jullien's biography. He dwells especially on the inconsistency of his countrymen in constantly making fun of the Germans, and then getting furious when once a German turns the tables on them.

tafel-product, "which the French took for one of those Rhine-wine songs they had before made fun of."

These comments are made in an essay entitled *What is German*, which was written in 1878. They are followed by this interesting explanation of the circumstances under which the *Kaisermarsch* was written.

"After the return of our victorious army, I made private inquiries in Berlin whether, in case a grand ceremonial in honor of the fallen soldiers were projected, I could be permitted to provide a piece suited to such a solemn occasion. But I was told that it was not considered desirable to make special provision for painful impressions to accompany the joyous return of the army. I proposed, still privately, another piece, which was to accompany the entrance of the army, and into which, at the close, — say in defiling before the victorious monarch, — the excellent vocal corps of the Prussian army might join with some popular melody. But this would have necessitated serious changes in the arrangements that had been completed long before, and I was dissuaded from my project. Consequently I arranged my *Kaisermarsch* for the concert-hall, for which let it be adapted as well as may be."

In plain English, he had been snubbed again. What had *he* to do with the German triumph — he whom almost all the music professors and critics united in pronouncing a charlatan? He then lacked but three years of sixty; but the Germans, as a nation, had not yet the remotest conception that his mind had given birth to ideas which, more than the ideas of any other German brain of this century, were destined to spread the glory of German art throughout the world. They did not anticipate that he would be the first to introduce German opera successfully in foreign countries; that "German Opera," in fact, was soon to be synonymous with "Wagner Opera," as it has been lately in New York and London.

The invasion of foreign countries began about that time. Russia had heard *Lohengrin* in 1867; Brussels followed with the same opera three years later; London had its first hearing of a Wagner opera — *Flying Dutchman* with Santley — in 1870; *Lohengrin* followed in 1875, with two simultaneous companies, one of which included Nilsson, Campanini, and Tietjens; *Tannhäuser* in 1876. Madrid did not hear a Wagner opera till 1876, while Italy heard *Lohengrin* as early as 1869. It was at Bologna, which for the time became a sort of Italian Bayreuth to which visitors came from all over the peninsula.[1] Wagner was made an honorary citizen of Bologna, and wrote a letter to Boïto expressing his gratification.

In the meantime he remained in his Triebschen retreat, devoted to the composition of the *Götterdämmerung*, the first act of which was completed in 1870. One of his tasks of the years 1871–3 was to collect his various essays, poems, newspaper articles, and public letters into a series of volumes, arranged chronologically. Nine of these volumes had appeared in 1873; a tenth was added after his death.

TAUSIG'S HAPPY THOUGHT

As the last drama of the Nibelung Tetralogy was making rapid progress, the plan for an adequate performance of this gigantic work began to engross his thoughts more and more. When King Ludwig had asked him to resume its composition, he had been filled with joy, for there seemed to be then no doubt that everything would

[1] Details concerning these performances may be found in Glasenapp, Vol. II. Chap. VIII.

be done in accordance with his wishes. But the Philistines who had hitherto thwarted his efforts proved too much even for a king. The foolish Munichers drove him out of their city; a local professor declared that he ought to be hanged; the leading paper[1] had said: "We are, with many experts, of the opinion that with the first stone [of the Wagner theatre] the foundation of a ruin would be laid."

What fools these mortals were! No one who has been in Munich can look at the picture of Semper's model theatre, in the *Bayreuther Festblätter*, without acknowledging that it would have been the greatest architectural ornament of that art-city, in the commanding site across the bridge, where the ungainly Maximilianeum now stands. A "ruin" indeed! The receipts of the Bayreuth festivals of 1891 and 1892 — the eighth and ninth — averaged about $150,000 each, and the annual visitors numbered about 25,000. If each of these spent only ten dollars, besides the price of his tickets, the Bayreuthers profited a million marks a year; but twice that sum would come nearer the mark. It was the project of building this "ruinous" Wagner theatre in Munich that had brought to a climax the machinations which led to Wagner's expulsion. As for bringing out the Tetralogy at the Court Theatre, that also seemed out of the question, after the maltreatment of *Rheingold* in spite of the King's wishes and positive orders. Other cities were even less available. In Vienna, *Tristan* had been put aside as "impossible" after two years' rehearsals, and *Die Meistersinger* refused because it was "Offenbach's turn." In Berlin even *Tannhäuser* had required

[1] *Allgemeine Zeitung*, Jan. 25, 1867.

ten years to pass quarantine, *Tristan* was yet unheard, though it had been available for more than a decade; and when as late as 1873 Wagner offered to bring out *Lohengrin* there without cuts, the matter was after some consideration dropped because it was, in plain language, "too much bother." In Dresden, too, the authorities were hostile; and in the smaller cities he could not expect to find a theatre and singers such as he needed.

Evidently a radical measure was called for. He reverted to his original idea of 1851, of building a special theatre on the Rhine, or elsewhere, for a Nibelung Festival. A plan as gigantic as the work to be produced; but Wagner, like his hero Siegfried, had never learned the meaning of the word *fear*, and he boldly proceeded toward his Ideal, in spite of Philistines, newspapers, and other dragons, whose extraordinary antics will be noticed presently. But where get the means for such an enterprise? It costs a small fortune to bring out a new opera — and here were four new ones, and a special theatre to be built in addition! He communicated his intentions at first to a few friends only, and one of these, the brilliant young pianist, Tausig, had a happy thought, inspired by his glowing enthusiasm for the *Meister*. He conceived, and, with the aid of the Baroness Marie von Schleinitz, elaborated, the plan of a Society of Patrons for collecting the Nibelung Festival funds. This plan was adopted by Wagner and briefly described by him in a public address to his friends, dated May 12, 1871: —

"The total expense of the preparations and performances of the stage-festival-play, *The Nibelung's Ring*, are estimated at 300,000 thalers [about $225,000]. This sum is to be provided by disposing

of one thousand certificates of membership, at 300 thalers each, among friends and patrons of this national project. The possession of such a certificate entitles the holder to a place for all the performances. Any patron is at liberty to secure several of these certificates; it is also permissible for three persons to participate in one of the certificates, each of them thereby acquiring the right to a seat at one of the performances of the festival-play."

Strange fatality! Hardly had Tausig, with a zeal that could not have been greater had the cause been his own, taken the first steps towards aiding his friend (he intended, among other things, to form a special orchestra, for benefit performances and to be used later at the festival), when typhoid fever carried him off at the early age of thirty. It was a sad blow to Wagner; he had lost his most intimate friends, Uhlig and Schnorr, in the flower of their youth; and now Tausig followed, and nothing remained but to write his epitaph and eulogy (IX. 385–6). The pen revolts at relating the indecencies of Wagner's enemies: even this epitaph was brutally parodied by one of them!

A new champion had meanwhile come forward. Emil Heckel,[1] of Mannheim, having expressed his desire to assist Wagner, was referred to Tausig, and with his consent he proposed the formation of Wagner Societies, to enable persons of limited means to take part in the work of collecting funds. Having returned to Mannheim, Heckel formed the first Wagner Society, in June, 1871. Members had to pay an annual due of five florins, in re-

[1] To Heckel Wagner wrote over sixty letters, in the years following, mostly relating to Bayreuth. His son, Karl Heckel, has utilized these letters for a brief history of the Bayreuth festivals, printed in Kürschner's *Wagner Jahrbuch*, 1886 (167–196); to this valuable document I am indebted for many important details.

turn for which they received a numbered ticket (or any number they chose, at that rate). For every thirty-five members a Patron's Certificate was bought, whereupon lots were drawn, and the fortunate winner had an opportunity to hear the Tetralogy for little more than the price of an ordinary theatre ticket, while the others had at least the consciousness of having helped along a noble cause. A further object of the society was to give concerts, the proceeds of which were also to be devoted to the purchase of certificates to be disposed of by lot. Similar societies were soon formed in Vienna, Munich, and Leipzig, and by April, 1874, the number of societies had grown to twenty-five in various German and foreign cities, including Brussels, London, St. Petersburg, and New York.

WHY BAYREUTH?

The question as to where the Nibelung Festival was to be held had in the meantime been decided in favor of the quiet old Bavarian town of Bayreuth, which is situated in the exact centre of Germany. Several weighty reasons determined this choice. There was of course no lack of available places; any German city, large or small, would have welcomed a scheme which promised to bring to it a number of distinguished artists and profitable pilgrims. Prominent among the applicants was the picturesque Baden-Baden, which offered as a special inducement the fact that a local audience, large enough to fill the theatre over and over again, would be formed every summer by the thousands of visitors at that popular resort. But this was precisely one of the things Wagner wished to avoid. His festival was to be not for

the curious, hungering for "amusement"; it was to be a serious æsthetic event in the lives of those who sympathized with his ambition to lay the foundation of a national and original German art, freed from all foreign admixture. His intention even was not to offer any seats at all for sale to the general public, but to give admission solely to members of the Wagner Societies, so as to keep out unbidden critics and other Philistines, who, since this was not to be a commercial enterprise, were not needed or desired.

Another reason, and the principal one, why the quiet Bayreuth was preferred to a fashionable summer resort, was that it belonged to the Kingdom of Bavaria. The King had never faltered in his devotion to the "art-work of the future," and he would not fail to contribute his share toward the erection of a temple for it, provided it was to be within his realms. Wagner himself, in a letter to Heckel, sums up his reasons for choosing Bayreuth, in half-a-dozen lines: —

"The place was to be no capital with an established theatre, nor one of the frequented baths, which just in summer would offer me a totally undesirable public; it was to be near the centre of Germany, and a Bavarian town, because I intend also to take up therein my permanent residence which I find I can properly do only in Bavaria."

Bayreuth had made a favorable impression on Wagner when he casually passed through it as a young man. In the spring of 1871 he revisited it for the first time, unofficially, to see if it would come up to his expectations. On his way back to Lucerne he stopped at Leipzig, where he conducted his *Kaisermarsch* at a private concert, and at Berlin, where he was banqueted and toasted. At the

house of Minister von Schleinitz he delivered a lecture on the proposed Nibelung Theatre, and a few days later he conducted a concert for the benefit of the König-Wilhelm Society, at which his *Kaisermarsch* was the novelty. It was warmly applauded by the public, but the critics mostly echoed the opinion of a Munich colleague who had elegantly characterized this march as "a piece of such barbaric rudeness, such impotence in invention, such shameless impudence in the use of all conceivable noises, that its name appears to us a blasphemy, its performance before a civilized public a coarse insult." How gently they cooed, these critics! A big canard, too, was hatched out by these gentlemen; namely, the rumor that Wagner had come to Berlin to try to secure the title of General-Music-Director. Nothing could have been farther from his intentions; for, as Praeger has said, although he ever bore himself with the consciousness of superiority, "as for titles and decorative distinctions he disdained them all. Were they not bestowed on numskulls? therefore he has loudly proclaimed genius should not dishonor its lofty intelligence in accepting such baubles." Very likely, if that enthusiastic Wagnerite, William II., had been Emperor then, such a title would have been offered him; but he would have refused it, even as he refused all such honors from the hands of the King of Bavaria.

LAYING THE CORNER-STONE

To reward Mannheim and Vienna for being the first cities to come to his assistance, Wagner accepted an urgent invitation to coöperate at a series of "Bayreuth"

concerts. The programme at Mannheim included the *Kaisermarsch*, of which, on this occasion, Pohl gave this succinct and admirable "table of contents": —

"Encased in a coat of mail, prepared for battle, the Emperor marches past with his renowned generals; the people crowd about him enthusiastically, the swords glitter; 'A stronghold sure is our Lord' [Luther's Choral] is the battle cry, which rises above all the din of battle; and in the folksong, 'Hail, hail, the Kaiser,' the song of triumph reaches its climax. This is genuine *German* music!"

At the concert in Vienna — which brought in the fabulous sum of 12,000 florins — an interesting and ominous incident occurred. A storm arose, and the Magic Fire music was accompanied by thunder and lightning. At the moment when Wotan invokes the fire-god Loge to come and protect the sleeping Valkyrie, a brilliant flash of lightning lit up the hall. It seemed to be the moment chosen by the gods to show that henceforth the much-persecuted and ill-fated artist was to be under their protection; and this was the interpretation put on the phenomenon by Wagner, who arose, in response to deafening applause and calls, and uttered these inspired words: —

"When the Greeks undertook a great work, they invoked Zeus to send them his lightning, in token of his favor. Let us, too, who are united here in the desire to found a hearth for German art, interpret to-day's lightning in favor of our national undertaking — as a sign of blessing from above."[1]

For his fifty-ninth birthday, on May 22, 1872, Wagner planned a grand Beethoven Festival at Bayreuth. The Ninth Symphony — which, because of its invoking in its

[1] Glasenapp, II. 322.

last part the aid of voice and poetry, had always seemed to him the point of transition from purely instrumental music to the "art-work of the future" — was to be performed, with the aid of Germany's leading vocalists and instrumentalists; at the same time representatives of the different Wagner Societies were to be thus given an opportunity to meet and to witness the laying of the corner-stone of the Nibelung Theatre. There had been no difficulty in finding a suitable location for such a theatre. The Bayreuthers, headed by Burgomaster Muncker and banker and representative Feustel, had of course received Wagner's project with open arms, feeling instinctively that it would arouse their town, like a Dornröschen, from its hundred years' slumber. They generously made him a present of a site large enough for a theatre with park-like surroundings — a site fit for a Walhalla and the beauties of which have been appreciated by numberless tourists. The theatre now stands on an eminence, within easy walking distance of the city (about twenty minutes' walk from the centre of the town) and commanding a romantic view of the surrounding country — the Franconian Switzerland. Before it lies the city, to the right and left the mountain chains of the Fichtelgebirge, and behind it a densely wooded hill, crowned with a tower of Victory, erected after the war with France.

Invitations to participate in this Beethoven Festival had been sent to various cities, and were in most cases promptly accepted. Riedel's vocal society in Leipzig, and Stern's in Berlin, formed the nucleus of the chorus; orchestral players came from Vienna, Leipzig, Weimar, Berlin, Munich, Stuttgart, etc.; and the soloists were

Niemann, Betz, Frl. Lehmann, Frau Jachmann. As the place for the concert Wagner had chosen the old opera-house — the same which he had had in mind when he first revisited Bayreuth, as being possibly available for his Tetralogy. Externally, it is "a jewel of the Renaissance style," but a glimpse at the interior had shown that no alteration could possibly fit it for his uses. It is the oldest theatre but one in Germany, and at the time when it was erected French plays and Italian operas alone were cultivated and enjoyed by the German potentates who built such houses. Wagner wanted a democratic theatre, not one which had been "so constructed that the Margrave's carriage could be driven inside the edifice and clear up to the court-box." He wanted, as we shall see in a moment, several other things which neither this nor any other existing opera-house provided. But for the concert this place would serve as well as any other. Of the rehearsals Tappert wrote an entertaining account,[1] from which I will copy this instantaneous photograph: —

"The difficult *presto-intraden* of the last movement caused the master and his men much trouble. Wagner expressed his desire that all rhythm and accents should disappear here; a tone-flood should break in, sudden, wild, irrepressible! It was difficult to carry out this idea, but after many attempts the interesting problem was solved. Then Betz got up and sang: 'O friends, not these tones.' His magnificent voice filled the vast auditorium, and the large audience listened in admiration. 'So that is the famous Betz!' 'Yes, that is *our* Betz,' the Berliner whispers proudly. 'More vivaciously!' cried Wagner, 'as if you meant to say: "Fellows, what awful stuff you are playing!"' 'Very well,' replied Betz, and proved at once that he had understood the hint."

[1] *Musikalisches Wochenblatt*, Nos. 23-26, 1872.

Tappert also makes some interesting comments on the *tempo rubato* with which Wagner vivified the Ninth Symphony, and the no less interesting remark that the main tempo and some of the *nuances* of the *Kaisermarsch* were here taken by the composer somewhat differently from what they had been in Berlin: as was to be expected, I may add, for only the academic critics fancy that there is such a thing as a cast-iron tempo for a piece, and that the one *they* consider right. Nor did Wagner believe in the theory that a conductor should be so elegant and graceful that a photograph might be taken of him at any moment. He gesticulated, stamped, and, towards the close of the symphony, he became so excited that his bâton broke in two.

On this occasion certain minor imperfections in Beethoven's orchestration, which interrupted the melodic continuity and distinctness in a few places, induced him to make slight alterations, which there can be no doubt whatever that Beethoven himself would have approved, and which he surely would have made himself had not the imperfect character of certain instruments used in his day prevented him.[1] In the little speeches made during and after the rehearsals Wagner joked about the lunatic asylum which faced the Nibelung Theatre on the opposite hill; and he congratulated himself and his friends on being there among themselves, solely to perform and enjoy Beethoven; adding, "The devil take any one who criticises us."

[1] These alterations are explained and justified by him in a special essay (IX. 277–304), where he points out how Liszt's arrangement of the symphony for piano first cleared up certain obscurities in the score due to defective instrumentation. Of course the wise critics knew better than these wretched bunglers, Liszt and Wagner, and indignantly "defended" Beethoven against their vandalisms!

The concert at the old opera-house was followed by the ceremony of the laying of the corner-stone on the hill, which was somewhat marred by the weather. While the band was playing the *Huldigungsmarsch*, Wagner took the hammer, and uttering the words: "Blessings on this stone; may it stand long and hold firmly," he gave it the first three strokes, whereupon the bystanders followed his example. There was a deep significance and touching tribute in performing this ceremony to the sounds of the *March of Homage* to King Ludwig, without whose encouragement the world would have never seen the Nibelung Theatre — perhaps never even possessed the Nibelung Tetralogy complete. The King, too, was with his friend in this hour; this telegram was received from him: —

"To the German poet-composer Herr Richard Wagner in Bayreuth.

"From the profoundest depths of my soul I express to you, dearest friend, my warmest and most sincere congratulations on this day of such great significance to all Germany. Blessing and prosperity to the great undertaking next year. To-day more than ever, I am united with you in spirit.

"LUDWIG.

"*Kochel*, May 22, 1872."

This telegram with other documents, including the statutes of the first Wagner Society, some coins, and a few verses of Wagner's, —

> "Hier schliess ich ein Geheimniss ein,
> Da ruh' es viele hundert Jahr';
> So lange es verwahrt der Stein,
> Macht es der Welt sich offenbar,"

was deposited in a tin box under the corner-stone.

IS IT NATIONAL?

"Blessing and prosperity to your undertaking *next year*," King Ludwig had telegraphed: those last two words tell a sad tale. The Nibelung Festival was intended to be in 1873; but although the score would have been ready by that time, and the artists all prepared for their tasks, it was not till 1876 that the festival could be held. Three times it had to be postponed, and even in 1876 a man with less courage than its projector would have abandoned it forever. The facts leading to these postponements constitute one of the strangest and least creditable pages, not so much in the history of German music as in German *Culturgeschichte*. But they must be related.

One thousand patrons' tickets would have to be disposed of, it was estimated, to make the festival possible. But in January, 1873, only 242 had been taken; in July, 340. An offer from Berlin of 660,000 marks, if the theatre were built there, could not be accepted, now that matters had progressed so far at Bayreuth, and for various other reasons: similar offers from London and Chicago were still less feasible. The Wagner Societies issued a circular calling attention to the national importance and interest of the project, and soliciting subscriptions of any amount, however small, from patriots. Of this circular 4000 copies were distributed and exposed in music and book shops; the result was that — several students at Giessen signed a few dollars! Another circular was sent to operatic managers asking for a Bayreuth benefit performance. To three of these negative

replies were returned; the others were not answered at all! Yet at that time most of the German opera-houses were already deriving their chief income from Wagner's operas, and common prudence and business sagacity, if no higher motive, ought to have induced the managers to assist at the birth of four more of these profitable works.

On Jan. 7, 1874, Heckel received a telegram begging him urgently to come to Bayreuth. On his arrival Wagner informed him that he had made up his mind to address to him a public letter announcing the collapse of the Bayreuth project: "I shall have the still open sides of the theatre covered with boards, to keep the owls out, at any rate, till circumstances permit us to continue." "That must not be!" was the retort made by Heckel, who proposed a plan of getting a certain sovereign to induce the German Emperor to patronize the undertaking. This plan could not be carried out; and Wagner's own efforts to secure the coöperation of the Imperial Government also failed. Bismarck was first appealed to. Wagner wrote him a letter urging him to read the last two pages of his pamphlet on the *Stage-Festival-Theatre at Bayreuth.*[1] Bismarck, who is an even greater ignoramus in music than Schopenhauer was, and who had no idea that he was dealing with a man greater than himself, did not even deign to answer Wagner's letter. More successful were the efforts of the Baroness von Schleinitz to win over the aged Emperor to the Bayreuth cause. At a moment when collapse seemed inevitable,

[1] In these pages he points out how the character of the theatre had been determined in every point by the nature of the work to be performed; and that the possible result was not only a new style of musico-dramatic art, but a new national style of architecture.

Wagner had ventured to appeal to the Emperor for a considerable portion of the "funds for the furtherance of national interests" which he knew were at his disposal.

"I was assured," he relates,[1] "that the Emperor at once granted my petition and commended it to the Chancellorship; but that in consequence of an unfavorable judgment of the president of that time, the matter was dropped. I was then told that the Imperial Chancellor himself had known nothing of this affair; that Herr Delbrück alone had had the matter in hand; that his dissuading the Emperor was not surprising, since he was exclusively a man of finance and cared for nothing else. On the other hand, it was said that the Cultusminister, Herr Falk, whom I might have looked on as a representative of my Plan, was purely a jurist, unmindful of other things."

And so on; the upshot being that he did not get the money. From his private funds the kind-hearted Kaiser contributed the value of twenty-five Patrons' Certificates ($5675), but this was only a drop where a bucket was needed. Wagner had hoped that a very small fraction of the milliards of indemnity paid by France might be spared from the military funds for the most original and most thoroughly German artistic undertaking ever projected. A million marks would have sufficed to establish for all time a model theatre where artists could meet annually to perfect themselves in a style of performance which would do justice for the first time not only to Wagner's works, but to some of the masterworks of all the national composers, which were now neglected because the true art of interpreting them had been lost. For it was Wagner's intention to bring out at Bayreuth not only his own music-dramas, but the best

[1] Retrospect on the Stage-Festival-Plays of 1876, X. 145.

works of Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, and others, under his own supervision; to make Bayreuth, in fact, a high school of German art.

The German nation scorned his offer. Can we blame Bismarck and the other politicians for this? Hardly; they knew nothing of art, and could have been induced to favor an art-movement only if the "experts" had urged them to it. But this is precisely what the experts did not do. Wagner himself recognized the fact that the failure of his efforts was due to a necessary "agreement with the great press" on the part of the politicians. He does not cite any of these "opinions of the press," leaving that pleasant duty to his biographers. Chapters might be filled with them; here we have room for only a few choice specimens, some of which appeared before, some after the event. After the Festival, one of the leading Viennese critics, L. Speidel, wrote: —

"No, no, and a third time no; the German nation has nothing in common with this, now-revealed, simian disgrace (*Affenschande*); and if it ever should take real pleasure in the counterfeit gold of the *Nibelung's Ring*, this mere fact would obliterate it from the list of western civilized nations."

It was after the festival that a leading Berlin critic, Gustav Engel, wrote, in the *Vossische Zeitung*, that he must deny Wagner's right to claim a national significance for his new theatre and his new dramas, on the ground that the German people did not recognize him as a great composer: —

"However much *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* may dominate the German theatres," he continues, "there is as yet [1876, seven years before Wagner's death!] no evidence of his being celebrated

by his countrymen as were Mozart[1] and Beethoven, as even Mendelssohn was in his day; only the fanatic zeal of his special admirers could deceive foreigners on this point."

Such being the opinions of leading "experts" of Berlin and Vienna, it is small wonder that the press at large should have maligned the Bayreuth scheme before as well as after the Festival. The *Grazer Wochenblatt für Literatur*, etc., alluded to

"the colossal impudence of the Bayreuth undertaking." The *Cologne Gazette* referred to the "coarse big-mouthedness" of the "German master," *à propos* of the preliminary Beethoven Festival of 1872; and this, according to Tappert, was the only reference made in this leading German paper to that event and to the laying of the corner-stone! Dr. Wilhelm Mohr, who wrote a pamphlet in 1872 entitled *Das Gründerthum in der Musik* (Stockswindle), quotes from a Leipzig musical paper this editorial note: "We shall not publish a report on the laying of the corner-stone at Bayreuth, although several have been sent to us. We consider it a farce, staged with genuine Wagnerian *raffinement*, and calculated solely for his personal glorification. Many of the scenes that occurred there are simply nauseating." Dr. Mohr himself denounced the Festival as giving foreigners "a spectacle of revolting ludicrousness and servility." The Würzburg *Stechapfel* wrote that "there is a such a thing as spiritual epidemics among nations. The persecution of witches was one of these; at present we have another in the Wagner swindle."

The climax of indecency was reached in a virulent pamphlet written by a Munich physician named Puschmann, who endeavored seriously to prove that Wagner

[1] Poor Engel was obviously not aware of the unfortunate fact that his own predecessor on the same paper wrote, three years before Mozart's death, *à propos* of *Don Juan*: "It is the product of a freak, a caprice, and not inspired by the heart. . . . Besides, we have never heard that Mozart was a composer of note."

was a lunatic. The pamphlet is, however, not unamusing. The charge of insanity is based on three grounds: Wagner's vanity, his fondness for luxury, and his belief that he is a victim of persecution. This reasoning of course is perfectly sound; for no artist before Wagner was ever guilty of vanity or love of luxury; and as for the idea of persecution, that was obviously a pure hallucination, for we know that nobody ever said an unkind word against Wagner. The funniest part of this business is that in a country where almost every man suffers from megalomania, the one man who had the best claim to the title of genius should have been pronounced a lunatic!

There was, however, a very serious side to all this. Wagner, as Lesimple relates, was greatly amused by Puschmann's pamphlet and often alluded to it jocularly; but he was not at all amused by the persistent efforts of influential newspapers to discredit his national undertaking by falsely declaring it the mere outcome of a desire for self-glorification. There was, for instance, the *Gartenlaube*, with a circulation of 400,000 copies, declaring editorially

"that the nation has absolutely nothing to do with the Bayreuth performances, and that it is only the nuisance of cliques and puffery which still flourishes in Germany that tries to give to the Wagner Festival a nimbus which in reality it does not possess nor can possess."

Referring to this article, Wagner says (X. 89):—

"The wealthy citizen of a small town had sent in his name to one of my friends for a seat at the Bayreuth Festival: he took this back when he read in the *Gartenlaube* that the whole thing was a swindle and an endeavor to get money under false pretences."

These machinations continued to the very last moment. When the first *Siegfried* performance had to be postponed a day on account of the illness of a singer, telegrams were sent to Vienna announcing the impending collapse of the whole Festival. The result of this was, as Wagner afterwards discovered, that "many persons in Vienna and Hungary who had intended to come for the second series, were induced to remain at home."

If we bear in mind this attitude of the press, and the general poverty of the Germans, we can understand why an undertaking, the mere *pluckiness* of which in any other country would have aroused universal admiration, should have been repeatedly on the point of collapse. Indeed, it would have collapsed had not King Ludwig once more stepped in and advanced the sum of 200,000 marks[1] absolutely needed to complete the arrangements. This, combined with $2500 sent by the Viceroy of Egypt and the 404 Certificates disposed of by July, 1875, induced Wagner finally to announce the Festival definitely for the summer of 1876. To do this, however, required the courage of a Siegfried; for, as he wrote to Heckel as late as Feb. 4, 1876: —

"Our anxieties are great, and in the end I must pronounce my decision to have the performances this year foolhardy. Our Patrons' Certificates number 490, but we need, according to the latest estimate, 1300 to cover expenses. The undertaking as originally projected is therefore a complete failure."

[1] Not *thalers*, as Jullien, with his — I had almost said usual — inaccuracy, states — a difference of $100,000! See the stenographic report of Wagner's interesting speech *ad hoc*, in Kürschner's *Jahrbuch*, 196–208.

VILLA WAHNFRIED

About a month before the Beethoven Festival at Bayreuth, Wagner had given up his villa near Lucerne and taken up his residence at Bayreuth — or rather near Bayreuth; for, pending the erection of his own house, he was living in an inn adjoining the lovely park called Fantaisie, an hour's drive from Bayreuth. About a week before they abandoned their home on the Lake of Lucerne, Madame Wagner wrote to Judith Gautier that they were about to leave Triebschen with heavy hearts, and she herself with apprehensions. Triebschen had been an ideal home for her husband. Here he had completed the *Meistersinger* and *Siegfried* scores and written many pages of the *Götterdämmerung* too. Here he had enjoyed the quiet and isolation which is essential to the full ripening of works of genius. The only disturbers of the peace had been the tourists who, after "doing" the Rigi, Pilatus, the lake, and the lion of Lucerne, had come to see that other local lion, "the King's favorite." Madame Gautier relates an amusing anecdote concerning the precautions that were taken by Madame Wagner to keep such unbidden visitors from molesting her husband, by keeping him in hiding under a bower till the tourists had been persuaded that he was "not at home." Wagner himself related to her a story of how Goethe once received such an intruder. He planted himself in the middle of the room, with arms crossed, eyes fixed on the ceiling, immovable as a statue. The Englishman had enough sense of humor to see the point: he put on his eyeglass, walked slowly around the poet, examining him

from head to foot, and then left without a word. "It is difficult to say," added Wagner, "which of the two showed the more wit."

Bayreuth, under ordinary circumstances, would have been quieter even than Triebschen, being entirely isolated from all the usual tourist routes, and being, moreover, one of the sleepiest old towns in Germany, the inhabitants of which (about 20,000 in number) might have felt inclined to regard the stories of the gaiety and frivolity that prevailed there in the eighteenth century as mere fables, had not the castles and the opera-house in town, and especially the neighboring Eremitage — a sort of miniature Versailles, with parks, rococo buildings and grottoes covered with shells, and waterworks — remained as witnesses of the brilliant past.[1] Now, after a century's sleep, the Bayreuthers were fated to be awakened to new life by the electric atmosphere of the very latest and most vivifying manifestations of modern art.

In one respect the Bayreuthers were not dormant. They were wide awake to the advantages which would accrue to them from this musical invasion, and they showed their gratitude in advance — a new sensation to Wagner! — by making him a present not only of a large plot of land for the theatre, but of another one, adjoining the pretty town-park, for a residence. Here, removed from the noise of street traffic, he built himself a villa according to his own plans. It is of interest to

[1] This biography is hardly the place for a history and description of Bayreuth. English visitors will find an entertaining account of the past and present in Mr. J. P. Jackson's *The Bayreuth of Wagner*. A guide to the city in several languages may be bought in any German bookstore.

know what ideal of a dwelling-house and a theatre the creator of the "Art-Work of the Future" had in his mind. Both these buildings are plain on the outside; in the case of the theatre, at any rate, from necessity, because the funds were not sufficient to build a more ornamental temple of art. The villa has for its sole ornament a fresco over the door with four figures — Wotan, as representative of German mythology, two females symbolizing music and tragedy, and the boy Siegfried. These figures are really portraits, their features bearing the likeness of Betz, Cosima Wagner, Schroeder-Devrient, and Siegfried Wagner. Beneath this fresco are three tablets, with the words: "Hier wo mein Wähnen Frieden fand WAHNFRIED sei dieses Haus von mir benannt." (Here where my illusions came to rest, Wahnfried [freedom from illusion] be this house christened).

It is to the interior, in the villa (as in the theatre), that we must look for Wagner's ideal. We pass through the door into a large hall, the ceiling of which is the roof itself, whence light is admitted through a colored glass window. Above we see a gallery leading to the family and bed rooms. On the right, below, is the dining-room, on the left the spacious library and reception-room. This room is elegantly adorned with the savings of a lifetime, the trophies of various triumphs. The music and book shelves are filled with the volumes of Wagner's favorite authors and composers, historic and philosophic books, orchestral and operatic scores. The walls are adorned with portraits of his mother and stepfather, Ludwig Geyer, Beethoven, Schopenhauer, King Ludwig, Schiller and Goethe, Liszt, and his daughter Cosima.

In one corner of the room is the magnificent Steinway Grand which served to convince Wagner that in one branch of music, at any rate, America leads the world. In front of the house is a bronze statue of Ludwig II., and the grounds are further adorned with trees and shrubbery, which at present almost conceal the house from the street.

In this house Wagner spent the happiest decade of his life, with his wife Cosima, and three children.[1] Frau Cosima took from him many of the burdens of life, looked after his business affairs, shielded him from unwelcome visitors, and answered his enormous correspondence as far as possible; excepting, of course, the autographs, for which demands came daily, especially from England and America, and which, it is said, Wagner was good-natured enough to answer as a rule. By the Bayreuthers he was stared at with awe and admiration whenever he sauntered down the streets, or took his daily walk in neighboring groves and fields, with his large dogs, in search of open-air inspiration for his *Parsifal* motives. His amiability is illustrated by an anecdote related by Glasenapp. An humble but honest citizen, employee at a local factory, had the courage to ask him to be godfather to his youngest child, born on the day when the corner-stone had been laid. Wagner accepted the invitation, came with his whole family, and spent the entire afternoon in the employee's house, joking and telling stories.

Another characteristic anecdote was related to me by Herr Oesterlein, owner of the Wagner Museum in Vienna.

[1] After Cosima's divorce, and her marriage to Wagner, Hans von Bülow avoided personal intercourse with the family, but continued his friendly relations and devotion as an artist.

One day while the theatre was in course of construction, Wagner had been up the hill in a bad humor. Something had been done contrary to his plans and instructions; he had tried to explain what he wanted, but the builders had not understood. One of the overseers, however (not a trained builder), saw a light, and acted in accordance with his inspiration. Next day Wagner found what had been done, and was delighted. "Who did this?" he asked. The name was given. "Where is he?" He could not be found. On returning to town, Wagner saw him, accosted him effusively, slapped him on the shoulder, and exclaiming, "You are a brilliant fellow," dragged him off to a tavern, drank a bottle of wine with him, and exchanged the brotherly "du" (thou) — the highest degree of cordiality in a German's repertory.

NIBELUNG THEATRE AND INVISIBLE ORCHESTRA

From Villa Wahnfried to the Nibelung Theatre we can walk comfortably in half an hour. German visitors — especially those suffering from the national disease of beer-corpulence — have uttered many groans over the necessity of climbing up this hill in warm weather, when carriages are scarce and dear; but in reality it is just a pleasant walk, to brace up the system for the performance to come. In 1876 the road leading up the hill was plain and unadorned, except as to the ever-widening view; at present the trees planted along the road have grown up into a stately alley, affording shade, hiding the distant view, and leaving it for a pleasant surprise when you arrive on top. The hill is higher than it seems when the theatre is first seen as the train approaches Bayreuth,

and the view, as already stated, is delightful, some of the peaks rising to a height of almost four thousand feet.

Although the present Nibelung Theatre was intended to be merely provisional,— until funds could be collected for a more substantial architectural ornament,— its exterior is by no means uninteresting. Pictures of it are so familiar that it is needless to describe it. I will only call attention to the fact that the back part of the building is almost twice as high as the front, owing to the scenic arrangements. In the works to be performed — especially *Rheingold* — the requisite changes of scenery are so rapid and elaborate that the ordinary way of shifting would be impracticable; the method adopted here consists in raising the old scene by machinery into the high part of the building, so that the new one, previously arranged in the deep cellar, can take its place. The stage is one of the largest in the world—larger than the auditorium, which seats about sixteen hundred, if we include the gallery (seating 300) above the royal boxes. The auditorium resembles the Greek amphitheatre, the seats rising in a semicircle one above the other, ending behind in a row of boxes surmounted by a gallery. There are no boxes or galleries on the sides, which are adorned with simple columns. Every seat faces the stage, and no one is obliged to look at the play with the distortions necessary in the usual curved galleries. The precautions against fire are unusually good. There are twelve different places of exit, with no stairs, so that the whole theatre can be emptied in a minute or two; while on the stage there are four so-called water-towers.

All these deviations from the usual plan of a theatric interior were, as Wagner states (IX. 399), the natural

outcome of the most important and fundamental innovation of all — the desire to make the orchestra invisible. With side galleries it would have been impossible to prevent the orchestra from being visible to many of the spectators; but with amphitheatric seats it was practicable, although the details required much study on the part of Wagner and his architectural assistants. The French composer Grétry, and Goethe in *Wilhelm Meister*, had anticipated Wagner in suggesting that the instrumental performers should be removed from sight; but it remained for him to show how this could be done *and to do it*. It is evident that, if a drama is to produce a perfect illusion of reality, the up and down motion of the violin-bows and trombones, the blows of the drummers, the gesticulations of the conductor, etc., should be as little seen by the spectators as the ropes and pulleys behind the scenes. The position of the orchestra remains as before, but it is lowered seventeen feet, while a thin partition entirely shuts off the sight of it, and the wall serves as a reflector of the sound.

Of all the innovations introduced in the art world by Wagner, this one found the most general and immediate acceptance. Even the professional opponents were convinced. Indeed, the advantages of the new system are too great to escape even hardened Philistines. The invisibility of the orchestra is not the only gain. By dispensing with side galleries the proscenium boxes are, of course, done away with. Now, of all the evidences of man's habitual lack of æsthetic refinement, a proscenium box is the most eloquent. Imagine several thousand spectators gathered together to enjoy a drama — musical or literary, and permitting the managers to mar the illu-

sion by having on each side of the stage boxes whose occupants, with their ogling, yawning, jewels, and conversation, make themselves quite as conspicuous as the actors themselves. At Bayreuth not only is this nuisance entirely done away with, but the architect Semper had suggested to Wagner a most ingenious way of utilizing the space between the stage and the first row of seats. This space, from which issued the sounds of the invisible orchestra, was called "the mystic abyss," because it separates reality from ideality, and the effect of the arrangement adopted — a narrow proscenium behind, and a wider one in front — was to produce the wonderful illusion as if the scene on the stage had been removed to a distance, while at the same time the spectator sees it with the distinctness of actual nearness; whence results the further illusion that the actors are seen in seemingly more than natural size. In a word, the effect produced on the spectator's eyes is very much like the superior distinctness and realism of a spectroscopic view compared with a photograph.

To the ears, the advantages of the new arrangement have proved still greater and more numerous. Wagner summed them up prophetically in one concise sentence (VI. 388); but we must look at them somewhat more closely, because they are of epoch-making importance: —

(1) If you sit near an orchestra, your ear, if it is sensitive, will be offended by all sorts of non-musical sounds issuing from the instruments — a strident sound from the flutes and clarinets, a scraping sound from the violins and other strings, a blatant sound from the trumpets, from the trombones a sound which is onomatopoetically described by the German word *prasselnd,* and so on. But

if you hear the same music through a thin partition, it becomes, as Wagner says, "etherealized [*verklärt*], purified from all these non-musical sounds." This result is attained at Bayreuth, and might be compared to the effect produced by the "retouching" of a photographic negative, — removing all coarse blemishes.

(2) The singer not only enjoys the advantage of directly facing the spectators without intervening orchestral and conductorial gesticulations, but the exclusion of the non-musical (anti-musical) sounds just described makes it easier for the audience to follow his enunciation of the words on which so much depends in a true music-drama. The absurd objection so often advanced against Wagner that his music is "noisy," and that the singers are "drowned" in the orchestral din, arose entirely from the fact that conductors and orchestras did not know how to play this music. Before Wagner, brass was chiefly used for massive, crashing *fortissimo* effects. He, too, uses it for such a purpose, and he is the supreme master of climax; but much more frequently he utilizes the brass merely for coloring purposes — to obtain those rich clang-tints which distinguish his music from all other. Brass players were not used to *piano*, and whenever Wagner superintended a rehearsal of one of his operas, he had to cry constantly *piano, piano!* At Bayreuth the brass is placed farthest away from the audience, under the stage, the consequence being that the trumpets and trombones could not, if they would, drown the voices of the singers; every word is heard distinctly, and no honest person who has been at Bayreuth would ever repeat the ridiculous charge that Wagner places the statue in the orchestra, and the pedestal on the stage —

a charge which has been brought by ignoramuses against every musical reformer.

(3) Perhaps even more important than these advantages is the third one summed up by Wagner in the word *verklärt* — *i.e.* etherealized, idealized, sublimated; a result following partly from the greater physical purity of the tones, partly from the mysterious invisibleness of the source of the music. Goethe had this same idea vaguely in mind when he wrote: "He always listened to music with his eyes closed, in order to concentrate his whole consciousness on the sole, pure enjoyment through the ears." More definitely do we grasp Wagner's idea if we recall the thrilling effect produced on us by music in a church: the priests long ago discovered the superior magic of invisible music. Operatic composers have occasionally followed ecclesiastic example, and delighted their hearers with an invisible chorus; but it remained for Wagner to reveal the charm of an invisible operatic orchestra, whose sounds seem to hover over the singers as the mingled perfumes over a bed of flowers. Years before the Nibelung Theatre was built, Wagner wrote that the orchestra "should completely disappear in relation to the singer, or, more correctly, should appear to be an integral part of his song." This ideal was realized at Bayreuth, thanks to the invisible orchestra.

Dr. J. Schucht[1] has made the suggestion that one source of the purified and idealized tone-color of the Bayreuth lies in the fact that the higher, dissonant overtones are absorbed, and do not get to the audience: "The brass is changed into gold." It is well, however, to bear

[1] *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Sept. 7, 1883. See also an interesting article on this subject, by K. Kipke in *Bayreuther Blätter*, 1889.

in mind that the Bayreuth arrangements, while perfectly adapted to Wagner's later dramas, might not be favorable to operas more simply orchestrated. Indeed, the performance of *Tannhäuser*, in 1891, convinced me that changes would have to be made even for Wagner's own early operas: the voices in this case were *too* loud, and in the choral numbers the orchestra was hardly audible. However, it is probable that changes in the position of the players and of the partitions would obviate this shortcoming; the advantages resulting from the invisible orchestra are certainly so great that it would be worth while to spend a great deal of time and money in acoustic experiments in order to secure these benefits for all operas.[1]

NIBELUNG AND OTHER REHEARSALS

In discussing the sound of the Nibelung orchestra, we somewhat anticipated our narrative; we must now return for a moment, to record briefly a few events preceding the Festival. During the months following the laying of the corner-stone Wagner was unusually busy with his pen. Essays on *Actors and Singers*, *On the Designation Music-Drama*, *On Acting*, public letters to Nietzsche, and to the Burgomaster of Bologna, followed in rapid succession. His next task — a most important and difficult one — was to find artists for the Festival. He needed singers

[1] A sense of justice compels me to add that one of the critics, Paul Lindau, did not entirely approve of the invisible orchestra; he gets a "deeper impression" if he can see the fiddle-bows, etc. This reminds me of a little story told in Gottschalk's *Notes of a Pianist*. Gottschalk found, when he gave concerts in Western American towns many years ago, that the spectators in the first rows often seemed to be much more interested in his pedalling than in his playing. *De gustibus non est disputandum!*

who were actors too, and for certain characters, such as the giants Fasolt and Fafner, and the dwarf, Mime, he wanted artists whose stature would not belie their rôles. To find all these artists, he visited in succession the leading German opera-houses. To judge by the essay *A Glimpse of the German Opera Houses of To-day*, in which he related some of his experiences, he was not very much pleased with what he saw and heard. He had been cordially received everywhere, and had never hesitated to give singers and conductors the benefit of his advice. In dealing with such vain and sensitive people it would have been wiser to hold his tongue; but Wagner never could resist the impulse, when he saw an error, to try to set it right. He also assisted at concerts, followed by banquets and speeches, which are conscientiously recorded in the pages of Glasenapp. At Leipzig and Weimar he spent a few days with Liszt. In June, 1873, appeared the vocal score of *Rheingold*, to be followed by the *Walküre* in September, 1874, *Siegfried* in January, 1876, and *Götterdämmerung* in June, 1876. The score of the last-named drama was completed in November, 1874.

There was no difficulty in securing the services of the singers who seemed best fitted for the Bayreuth performances. Unlike the critics, the German singers realized the importance of this event, and in most cases placed themselves at the Meister's service without asking any compensation except the honor of coöperating with him. Doubtless, too, they felt that the personal instruction they would receive from the composer would be worth more to them than the highest honorarium that any Court Theatre had ever paid them. The prestige of having

been a Bayreuth singer served as a diploma which opened all theatre doors wide to them. Take Materna as an instance. She received $1000 an evening for singing in the Metropolitan Opera House at New York, in 1884–5. But would she have obtained a quarter of that sum except for her Bayreuth fame? She owes her international reputation chiefly to her wonderful Brünnhilde, which Wagner taught her, bar for bar. Her Isolde, which he did not teach her, has never been a success.

Preliminary rehearsals, attended by the leading singers and the orchestra, were held in July and August, 1875, at first in Wagner's house, subsequently in the theatre, of which the stage had made more progress towards completion than the auditorium. Intendant Hülsen had, with unexpected amiability, permitted twenty-six of his best orchestral players to join the Nibelung orchestra, which also included musicians from Munich, Vienna, Weimar, Breslau, Hanover, and other cities. The choice of Hans Richter for conductor was a most wise one. More than any other musician, he was initiated into the secrets of Wagner's score; and apart from this he was doubtless the best conductor of the period. As Tappert wrote of him in 1872: "Richter is as much at home in the orchestra as a fish in the water. As real *Kapellmeister* we see him now with a viola in his hand, and suddenly we find him behind the big drum, or tinkling the triangle." Kufferath relates a little incident of a rehearsal at Brussels which tells us more about Richter's art, and the secret of his greatness, than pages of technical disquisition: —

"You know, in the *Tristan* prelude, the plaintive melody of the oboe which, after the first song of the violoncellos, rises in semi-

tones, to die away in a very tender *pianissimo*. To indicate the expression of this phrase, while his right hand was beating the measure, M. Richter quietly placed his left hand on his heart, with a natural and unaffected movement that said plainly and touchingly, 'Play with soul.' And his wish was obeyed."

Richter had arranged that when Wagner came up for the first time to meet his musicians in the Nibelung Theatre, the moment he entered, the orchestra played the sublime Walhalla strains from *Rheingold*, and Betz greeted him in the words in which Wotan celebrates the completion of the burg of the gods, built by the giants on mountain summit. It was a most happy thought, which Wagner appreciated cordially.

Heinrich Porges,[1] who acted the rôle of Boswell during the Bayreuth rehearsals, calls attention to the unique way in which they were carried on. It is customary to begin with separate rehearsals for the string and wind instruments, combining them afterwards. Here, on the contrary, the whole orchestra played an act in the morning, repeating it in the afternoon with the singers; in this way all participants gained at once a general idea of the whole, perfecting of details being left to later meetings. With such eminent vocal and instrumental artists as were assembled, even these first readings could not fail to be of interest, and permission to attend them had been granted to a few hundred persons, including Liszt and Frau von Schleinitz. As the builders had not yet had time to prepare more than eighty seats, the remaining spectators had to squat on boxes or planks, or on the floor. At the place where the prompter's box usually is, Wagner had a small table with a lamp, and a desk, on

[1] See his articles in the *Bayreuther Blätter*.

which lay his score, and whence he superintended the *tout ensemble.*

Among the visitors who appeared at Bayreuth during these rehearsals were Director Jauner of the Vienna Opera, and Intendant Hülsen of Berlin; both came to make arrangements for the production of *Tristan* in their cities, if possible with the composer's coöperation (the wind had turned!); and Jauner also begged Wagner to bring out at Vienna the Paris version of *Tannhäuser*, and *Lohengrin* without cuts. The Meister was willing, and after a short rest at Teplitz he took up his residence for two months in Vienna, devoting day after day zealously to the rehearsals of his early operas. *Tannhäuser* came first. At the close there were persistent calls for the composer, who finally appeared on the stage, and said: —

"Fifteen years have passed since I first heard my *Lohengrin*, here in Vienna, and enjoyed so favorable a reception on your part. This joy has been renewed to-day, and this urges me to continue in my efforts to make my works clearer to you, so far as the forces at my disposal permit this."

It has been often pointed out how unfortunate and insulting Wagner used to be in his public speeches. Here he had been kindly and generously invited to bring out his *Tannhäuser* in the perfected version; he had been permitted, without being charged a penny, to spend three weeks of his time in putting things into shape; a tremendous audience had been attracted, for which no one had reproached him: yet instead of feeling overwhelmed by all these favors, and thanking the public, the artists, and the management on his knees, he went and intimated that he could bring out his operas in perfect form only "in so far as the forces placed at his disposal permitted!"

It was a horrid speech to make, and the critics told him so frankly. Only a few years before, one of his works had been put aside in Vienna after two years' rehearsals, as "impossible": how, under these circumstances, could he *dare* to insinuate that his operas could not be done there to absolute perfection? Was there ever a man so void of gratitude, so insulting, so odious? But let us draw a veil over the painful scene, merely adding, with a sense of relief, that after *Lohengrin*, he refrained from making another insulting speech; he even tried to make up for his former brutal conduct by personally conducting that opera once — a very unusual favor — for the benefit of the chorus. After his departure, the Viennese fell back on the old *Tannhäuser* and the old *Lohengrin* with all their imperfections and cuts: they were shorter, and allowed the burghers to get home before the porter had locked the front door, and thus save their five cents.

Not long after these incidents in Vienna, Wagner went to Berlin to assist at the *première* of *Tristan*. Emperor William himself took a special interest in this event; he even attended the dress rehearsal, and directed that the receipts of the first performance should be handed over to the Bayreuth funds, which thus gained the handsome addition of almost $4000 — an almost unprecedented sum for the Berlin Opera. The press was still for the most part hostile; but the performance was a good one, and a part of the audience, at any rate, appreciated the grandeur of the drama; not all, however; for, according to Paul Lindau, "the mournful melody of the Breton shepherd at the beginning of the last act, provoked an unfortunate outbreak of hilarity. The public, unable to see the shepherd, did not know what the blowing behind the

scene signified!" Happened at the Metropolis of Cosmic Intelligence, on March 20, 1876!

On June 3d the preparations for the *Nibelung's Ring* were actively resumed at Bayreuth. They began with separate rehearsals of the instrumental groups and of the vocalists. No less than six weeks were thus required to reach the end of the Tetralogy. The second series of rehearsals was brought to an end in two weeks, each day being devoted to a separate act; and not till the third series, the *Hauptproben*, was a complete drama gone over each time; the same being done, of course, at the *Generalproben*, or what we call the dress rehearsals. All the singers and players had arrived in town promptly. The orchestra, numbering 113, — double the size of the usual operatic orchestras, — with Wilhelmj as leader of the violins, took its place in the mystic abyss, which, if it was hot and prevented them from seeing either the spectators or the stage, offered, on the other hand, this midsummer advantage, that the players needed no full dress, but could play in shirt sleeves — a privilege which many made use of, including Hans Richter, who could be seen, of course, from the stage, but not from the auditorium.

Some readers may wonder why Wagner himself did not on this occasion display his universally admired skill as a conductor by assuming the bâton personally. In the first place, because he had perfect confidence in Hans Richter; secondly, because he was needed to supervise not only the orchestra, but the scenic arrangements, and every gesture, tone, and facial expression of the singers. His usual place, as already stated, was at a small table where the prompter's box would have been if he had

permitted such a nuisance in his theatre. But every moment he would jump up to arrange a group, phrase a bar for a singer, set the *mise-en-scène* right, or ask the orchestra to repeat a passage. A little bridge had been built for him across the mystic abyss, so that he could easily cross into the auditorium to study a scenic or acoustic effect; thus he was active all the time, working harder than any of his assistants. Nor did his sixty-three years hold him back from any acrobatic experiment. When, at one rehearsal, Alberich hesitated, at the end of the first *Rheingold* scene, to trust himself to the apparatus which precipitates him from the high rock to the bed of the Rhine, Wagner pushed him aside and went through the performance for him. The Bayreuth turners who offered their services as Nibelungs, were, by his example, so completely transformed into dwarfish, crawling gnomes, that no one would have suspected what fine examples of physical development they were; and so on, in regard to every detail. In this universal stage-genius Wagner never had a parallel, and it was no idle boast of his when he once wrote to a friend that if he had the voice of a Tichatschek he would do something to astonish theatre-goers.

The real Wagner is admirably revealed in two notices which he posted behind the scenes, and in the mystic abyss: —

"To the Singers: Distinctness, the large notes come of themselves, the small notes and their text are the main thing. *Never say anything to the public.* In monologues always look up or down, never straight ahead. Last wish: preserve me your good will, my friends."

In the orchestra this brief notice was posted: "No

preludizing! Piano, pianissimo, then all will be well." In connection with this last direction, it is interesting to read an observation made by Boswell Porges:[1] —

"At the rehearsals of the *Nibelung's Ring* it was found necessary in many places to moderate the dynamic marks, substituting a *forte* for a *fortissimo*, a *mezzoforte* for a *forte*, etc. This was done for the reason above all to enable the singer to enounce his tone and word distinctly. . . . This relation of the dynamic force of the singer to the orchestra was frequently discussed during the rehearsals, and the Meister repeatedly made use of his favorite comparison — that the orchestra should always bear the singer as the agitated sea bears a boat, but without ever putting it in danger of capsizing or of sinking."

Another observation by Porges contains a whole treatise on conducting, in a nutshell: —

"Special attention was called by the Meister to the fact that the Walhalla theme, in all those places where it appears as the expression of a present situation, should be played in a stately manner, slowly, and with broad sonority; whereas in places where it only appears in the orchestra as a reminiscent motive (as, for example, in Sieglinde's narrative in the *Walküre*) it should be played somewhat faster, and with less emphasizing of the rhythmic accents, somewhat like the light and careless stress which actors place on a parenthetic sentence."

But we must hurry on to the Festival itself, the most interesting and important event in the history of music.

THE FIRST BAYREUTH FESTIVAL

When Liszt was first informed of the mammoth project of a Nibelung Trilogy to be produced at a special Nibelung Festival, he urged his enterprising friend to go

[1] *Bayreuther Blätter*, June, 1880.

ahead undauntedly with his work, for which the same motto might be adopted as that placed before the architects of the Seville Cathedral by the cathedral authorities: "Build us such a temple that future generations will have to say the ecclesiastics were crazy to undertake such an extraordinary thing. And yet the Cathedral stands!" That was written in 1851; and exactly twenty-five years later the Bayreuth Theatre stood, ready for the Nibelung Trilogy. Was Wagner crazy when he undertook this scheme? His contemporaries seemed to think so. The "gentlemen of the press" exhausted their ingenuity in inventing pet names for "His Majesty Richard the First," the "Infallible music-Pope," and "Shah of Bayreuth." He was called a "charlatan," "royal Bavarian ruffian," "*enfant terrible*," "fool," "musical Heliogabalus," "swallower of Jews," ditto of Frenchmen, "musical Lassalle," "Bavarian lunatic," "*méprisable Bavarois*," "song murderer," "plagiarist" of Berlioz, of Mendelssohn, and of Offenbach (fact!), "Saxon schoolmaster," "Thersites," "Vandal of art," "Don Quixote," "Musical Münchhausen," and so on. As even Mr. Joseph Bennett was obliged to confess in 1876: "Wagner has been the butt of ridicule for more than twenty years, and the answer to it all is — Bayreuth."

Royalty, genius, talent, curiosity, and envy travelled to this remote Bavarian town to see the work of his lifetime. The former rebel and twelve-years' political exile was now the host of German and foreign royalty. Two Emperors, a King, three Grand Dukes, besides dukes, counts, and other representatives of the aristocracy by the score, appeared as patrons and spectators: Emperor William I., Dom Pedro of Brazil, King Ludwig II., the

Grand Dukes of Weimar, of Baden, and of Mecklenburg, the Duke of Anhalt, Prince Wladimir of Russia, Prince William of Hessen. The Viceroy of Egypt and the Sultan of Turkey were also patrons, but did not appear personally. As for musicians, four countries at any rate had their greatest masters there, — Liszt representing Hungary, Saint-Saëns France, Grieg Norway, and Wagner himself Germany. German art was well represented, but the German composers and musicians — major and minor — were conspicuous by their absence: why should they have contributed their mite to the glorification of a rival?[1]

The first of the royal personages to arrive was King Ludwig. Having a strong aversion to crowds and demonstrations, he managed to escape the multitude by leaving the train a few miles outside the town. Here a carpet was spread from the track to his carriage, and Wagner and the Mayor of Bayreuth were present to receive him and accompany him to his residence at the Eremitage. The King attended the last series of rehearsals, but not the first performances, possibly because he had no desire just then to meet the Emperor, although that monarch was there by his special invitation. Perhaps King Ludwig's penchant for private performances had something to do with his actions. On the *Rheingold* night no spectator was permitted in any part of the house except in the gallery, out of the King's sight; but the empty house proving injurious to the acoustic effect, many others were admitted to the last three dramas, at the King's special request. After the curtain had fallen

[1] The Berlin *National Zeitung* published a triumphant list of famous people who were *not* at Bayreuth!

on the *Götterdämmerung*, the monarch sent a message of thanks to the artists, saying that he would remember these days as among the most delightful in his life. He then left Bayreuth, but returned for the third series ten days later.

Emperor William arrived on Aug. 12, the day before the first performance. He was received at the station by Wagner, the Mayor, and an immense concourse of visitors and natives. After the brief reception ceremonies, the Emperor drove to the Eremitage, through the town, which was gay with flags and with young fir-trees placed along the sidewalks. The usual fine Kaiser-weather had followed his Majesty, who looked twenty years younger than he was, and unlike the shy King Ludwig, seemed to love the curious multitude, to whose signs of homage he replied with smiles and bows. He complimented Wagner on the success of his undertaking, adding: "I did not believe you would be able to carry it through." In the evening the enthusiastic Bayreuthers, who had never seen an emperor in their town before, had a grand torchlight procession to the Eremitage.

On the following day the Kaiser requested to see the theatre and the "mystic abyss," where his "court musicians had to perspire," and in the evening he was in his seat at seven, with his usual punctuality. He remained, however, only to hear *Rheingold* and *Walküre* — to the ill-concealed pleasure of the Philistines, who saw in this "desertion" a great chance for jokes and comments. Jullien, as usual, follows the foolish newspaper talk, remarking that "Wagner was not the man ever to forgive the Emperor for this." Now, there would have been nothing strange or discreditable to any one concerned, if

the Emperor had found the Tetralogy uninteresting. Unlike Frederick the Great and his own nephew, William II., Kaiser Wilhelm was not at all musical, and the opera was to him little more than a pleasant form of court ceremony. But I have positive proof that he *never intended* to remain for a whole Nibelung Cyclus. It lies in this Berlin despatch printed in the German newspapers on Aug. 2, 1876: —

"The Emperor, in reply to King Ludwig of Bavaria's invitation to attend the Wagner performances at Bayreuth, has commissioned General v. d. Tann with the delivery of an extremely cordial autograph letter, in which he accepts the invitation, his health permitting, to attend said performances. Should the Emperor therefore undertake a trip to Bayreuth, he would be there in the interval between the 13th and 16th, and *attend a part of the first series* of performances." [1]

It was fortunate for the royalty and aristocracy gathered on this occasion that Bayreuth had once been a *Residenzstadt*, so that there were several castles available

[1] Considering all the circumstances of the case, it was, indeed, quite remarkable that the Emperor should have come to Bayreuth at all. In connection with this matter it is of interest to read a letter he once addressed to Intendant von Hülsen (printed in Helène von Hülsen's biography of her husband): "My daughter, the Grandduchess of Baden, has asked me if it were not possible to give in Berlin one of Wagner's latest operas, which form, I believe, a cyclus. I know of these works nothing further than that Liszt at Weimar tried to read them, but that the notes are said to be so *crazy* that the idea of a performance was at once abandoned. I therefore beg you for information regarding this matter. Wagner's desire to rehearse his work personally is a political question, which would have to be decided separately." We can imagine what Hülsen's answer to this note was. The last sentence of the Emperor's note shows that it must have been written before 1861 while Wagner was still an exile. Had Hülsen been great enough to appreciate Wagner's genius, there is reason to think that Kaiser Wilhelm might have anticipated King Ludwig in coming to his rescue. Thanks to Hülsen he lost this opportunity of adding another jewel to his crown.

for their headquarters. The other visitors fared less sumptuously. The artists themselves[1] were quartered among the inhabitants, while several of them found comfortable rooms in the local prison and the lunatic asylum. At the hotels the price of rooms rose from fifty cents to two and three dollars a day. But the chief difficulty was to get something to eat. The small hotels could accommodate only their own guests, and of restaurants there were only a few. I remember a characteristic scene at Lochmüller's, the principal restaurant at that time. Every one at the crowded tables was imploring the waiters to serve them, and finally the majority decided that they might save an hour or two by waiting on themselves. So they all crowded around the buffet, ready to grasp whatever appeared from the kitchen; while the waiters, pushed aside, stood in a corner, and one of them sarcastically suggested to his companions that they should sit down and let the guests wait on them.[2]

But the most Bohemian scenes were to be witnessed at Angermann's, the leading beer tavern. This had been for years one of Wagner's favorite resorts, although its appearance was anything but inviting: low, dark rooms, primitive wooden chairs and tables, felt mats for the beer-glasses. Here he used to sit, entertaining his friends

[1] The orchestral musicians received free lodgings and board, besides travelling expenses and $45 a month.

[2] At later festivals matters were much improved, but the mediæval spirit had not yet quite disappeared. One day I went with several friends to a restaurant and asked if we could order our dinner for next day. We were told we could, and so we could; but when we arrived next day, we found that there was nothing but the regular dinner,—chiefly pork. As we did not care for pork in midsummer, we quietly took our hats and walked down stairs. Just before we reached the bottom the landlord put his head over the balustrade and shouted, "Call again in ten years!"

with jokes, anecdotes, and reminiscences. "Then when the room was echoing with laughter," Lesimple relates, "he knocked with his glass for the waitress, 'Brünnhilde,' and, provided with new supplies, continued his animated narrative." The presence of a single unsympathetic person, however, would at once put him "out of tune." Even during the rehearsals this tavern was found inadequate to the demands made on it, and one could see conductors, tenors, sopranos, chorus, and soloists, besides orchestral players, sitting outdoors on beer-kegs, or even on the curbstone, a glass in one hand, a sandwich in the other. During the performances, even beer-kegs and curbstones were at a premium, and lucky he who, by waiting on himself, could secure a sausage and a glass of foaming "Bavarian."

The projector of the Festival had by no means overlooked the culinary side of the problem. A restaurant had been built near the theatre, where sandwiches could be obtained as well as a regular supper. This supper was to be, indeed, part of the regular programme. It has often been urged against Wagner's music-dramas that they make too great demands on our attention and our powers of physical endurance, especially after a day's hard work, such as falls to the lot of most mortals. The desire to obviate this objection was one of the motives leading to the selection of Bayreuth, in preference to a large city. Here, as at the Olympic festivals in ancient Greece, the spectators would come into the theatre, not to seek a frivolous and shallow entertainment, for tired brains; but they would take their recreation in the daytime, walking and driving in the bracing mountain air, amid the varied scenes of the Franconian Switzerland;

while toward the close of the day they would assemble, with fresh energies, for serious appreciation of an art-work which cannot be enjoyed passively, like a cup of coffee, but calls for *active* intellectual and emotional participation on the spectator's part. As a further precaution against fatigue, arrangement was made for having, between the acts, intermissions of about an hour's duration, during which the audience could seek refreshment in a walk, conversation, lunch, or a regular supper; so that every brain came fresh to the third act, which in most of Wagner's dramas is the best. To prevent any one from being left out, a motive from the drama that was to be given was blown by brass players twice — ten and five minutes before the resumption of the music. The result was that every one was in his place several minutes before the overture began — a reform for which alone Wagner would deserve to be placed in the calendar of saints. No one, absolutely, was admitted after the doors had been closed.[1]

The first performance of *Rheingold* was postponed, by special placard, from five o'clock to seven, because the Emperor of Brazil was unable to arrive on time. But this made no difference, as that *Vorspiel* to the Trilogy lasts less than three hours. When the distinguished and motley crowd, representing every civilized country on the globe — including "the United States and California," as a German paper had it — entered the auditorium, every one was surprised at the novelty of the theatre — original, like everything emanating from Wagner's mind.

[1] It was related on the *Walküre* evening that millionnaire Rothschild of Vienna had thus lost one act — probably because he had lingered too long in quest of a sandwich or a *Wiener Würstl*.

What impressed connoisseurs especially — apart from the features already described — was the absence of a chandelier, and the smallness of the auditorium, the desirability of which Grétry had already mentioned as a feature of his ideal theatre, while Berlioz has given us the philosophy of the matter in the remark that "sound beyond a certain distance, although we may still hear it, is like a flame that we see, but the warmth of which we do not feel." Finally, when the stage picture was to be revealed, after the mystic *Rheingold* prelude, we did not see a painted curtain stiffly rolled up, but there was a real curtain, divided in the middle, and pushed aside as by invisible hands.

The artists who took part in the performance were Betz (Wotan), Vogl (Loge), Hill (Alberich), Schlosser (Mime), Gura (Donner), Eilers (Fasolt), Reichenberg (Fafner), and the Misses Lilli and Marie Lehmann and Marie Lammert as the Rhine-maidens, whose enchanting song first interrupts the orchestral mirroring of the flowing waters of the Rhine. All these artists acquitted themselves creditably, although several of them had but lately been introduced to the new vocal style. Vogl was even loudly applauded after Loge's narrative, to the disgust of the true Wagnerites, who object to this silly and vicious method of distinguishing a singer at the expense of the music, and who, of course, did not join in this foolish and ill-timed applause.[1] When the curtain closed

[1] Such applause is really an *insult to the composer* and his work, which no true admirer would be guilty of. Yet, with amusing naïveté, Paul Lindau found in the fact that this narrative, which, he thinks, approaches in form the older "operatic melody," alone was specially applauded, an argument against the Wagnerian form of the music-drama!

upon the last scene, a storm of applause arose; it lasted fully ten minutes, with calls for Wagner and the artists; but no one appeared, although two Emperors and three Grand Dukes were among those waiting. On the following day a notice was posted up begging the public not to take it ill that their generous applause had not been responded to, as it was the firm intention of all the artists engaged in the enterprise not to show themselves on the stage except in the rôles assigned to them. Those who know the usual vanity of singers — their pettiness in regard to precedence on a programme, the size of the type, etc. — will realize that in thus getting the consent of all his vocalists to merge their personalities and vanities entirely in their rôles, Wagner had won another tremendous victory for art.

Nor did he wish to appear himself, although that would have marred no stage illusion. He disliked ovations of that sort, and, moreover, it was said that he had left the theatre before the close of the drama, displeased by accidents and shortcomings in the scenic department, on which so much depends in *Rheingold*. There had been, especially, an unfortunate hitch in changing from the first scene to the second. This was merely due to the nervousness of the workmen: it had not occurred at the last rehearsal, not did it occur at subsequent repetitions. But the house was full of hostile critics, and Wagner knew that all the world would now be informed by telegraph or by letter that the *Rheingold* scenery was no better than it had been at Munich when Hans Richter refused to conduct. This is precisely what the "gentlemen of the press" did. Overlooking the magnificent realism and perfect illusion of the first scene where the

Rhine-maidens seemed actually to swim about under the water; the splendid subterranean scenes among the Nibelung dwarfs, the stately Walhalla castle on the mountain, and the superbly realistic storm and lightning, when Donner has gathered the dark clouds; ignoring the fine effect of the colored steam in place of the curtain which is usually intruded and mars the illusion; ignoring the general superiority of the scenic arrangements to those seen at opera-houses — a really painted sky, and no flimsy backgrounds and unrealistic corners, — they condemned the entire stage setting because of that accidental hitch, and because the rainbow bridge over which the gods marched was not perfect, and the snake into which Alberich changed himself produced a "comic effect"!

A few shortcomings, I may as well add in this place, occurred in the following dramas; the duel amid the clouds in the *Walküre* was a failure, and the last scene in the *Götterdämmerung* — an enormously difficult one — was far from perfect, while the dragon in *Siegfried* was an unwieldy and not very convincing beast. (It had been ordered from England, and arrived in an incomplete form.) But who was to blame for this? Not Wagner or his assistant Brandt; the lack of funds was the cause, and at the bottom of it all were these same journalists who were now scoffing at what was really *their* work: *their* persistent misrepresentation of Wagner, *their* ridiculing of his enterprise, had prevented the German people from taking an interest in Bayreuth in sufficiently large numbers to make it possible to procure all the scenic materials just as they were needed and planned.

On Aug. 14 the first Bayreuth performance of the *Walküre* was given, the cast including Materna (Brünn-

hilde), Niemann (Siegmund), Scheffzky (Sieglinde), Betz (Wotan), Niering (Hunding), Grün (Fricka), while the eight Valkyries included such names as Lilli Lehmann, Reicher-Kindermann, Jachmann-Wagner, Jaïda; it was a chorus of prima donnas, and its effect on the audience was electrifying. That Materna, Niemann, and Betz were superb in their rôles, the present generation need not be told. But it was in the two dramas following that Materna first showed to what superb heights her art could rise under Wagner's guidance. Owing to Unger's indisposition, *Siegfried* had to be postponed till Aug. 16. Its cast embraced Unger (Siegfried), Materna (Brünnhilde), Betz (Wotan), Schlosser (Mime), Hill (Alberich), Reichenberg (Fafner), Jaïda (Erda), Lilli Lehmann (Forest Bird). The *Götterdämmerung* followed on Aug. 17, with Siegfried, Brünnhilde, Alberich, and the Rhine-daughters the same as in the preceding dramas, besides Gura (Gunther), Siehr (Hagen), Weckerlin (Gutrune), Jaïda (Waltraute). There is no space here to discuss these performances in detail. In general, however, it must be said that while some of the Bayreuth artists have since sung even better than they did in 1876, and while some of the rôles have since been better interpreted, — notably is the Siegfried of Alvary and of Vogl better than Unger's was, — yet there was something in the Bayreuth ensemble that I have always missed elsewhere, and especially in that constant adaptation of action to orchestra, bar by bar, which adds so much to the eloquence of the music, and to the understanding and vividness of the plot. There has never been a stage-manager equal to Wagner.

A SCANDALOUS SPEECH

At the close of the *Götterdämmerung*, the applause was so tumultuous and so persistent that Wagner found it impossible to withstand any longer. He appeared on the stage and spoke these words: "To your favor, and to the infinite exertions of my coöperating artists, you owe this deed. What I have to say to you besides this might be summed up in a few words, in an axiom. You have seen what we can do; it is now for you to will. And if *you* will, we shall have an art!" Bowed and disappeared amid renewed applause. Now, if Wagner had fallen down from the sky and never written a line about his art previous to this speech, one might have imagined him a very conceited person. Was there no art before the *Nibelung's Ring?* Is there no art in Homer, in Dante, in Shakespeare, in Goethe? Were not Bach, and Mozart, and Beethoven artists? Are not *Don Juan*, *Fidelio*, *Euryanthe*, works of art? Imagine the colossal vanity of this man, to fancy that there was no art before him! Surely the Bayreuth success must have turned his head! Puschmann was right — Wagner was crazy!

Had Wagner never before this occasion written a word, one *might*, I repeat, have interpreted his speech in this manner. But he had written many big volumes of essays and public letters, explaining his views of art, and expressing his unbounded admiration for the great poets and composers of the past. He had explained over and over and over again what his life's aim was: the creation of a new art, thoroughly German, in which

music and the drama would enter into a real *union*, and not a mere association; in a word, the music-drama as distinguished from the old-fashioned opera. This music-drama, he believed, would be the "art-work of the future," more potent to move the feelings than music alone or the drama alone. Now, if there was one place in the world where he had reason to think he could take for granted *some* knowledge of his views on the part of the audience, it was Bayreuth. When he said, "if *you* will, we shall now have an art," he never dreamed that any one could be such an ass as to fancy that he meant that there had been no art before the *Nibelung's Ring*. He took it for granted that every person endowed with the usual intellectual faculties would understand that he was merely expressing in an epigrammatic form, suitable for the occasion, his belief that now a specimen of this new art-work had been placed before his friends; that *he* had done his part, and that it remained for *them*, if they had been persuaded that this was the "art-work of the future," to foster it.

Yet, incredible as it may seem, the vast majority of the German critics — either in ignorance or conscious malice — wrote and telegraphed to their newspapers fierce and indignant diatribes on Wagner's "vanity" and "impudence," in "denying that there had been any art before his festival play"! Future generations will find it difficult to believe this; but printed documents proving it exist by the score, some of them — like those of Gustav Engel, Paul Lindau, Hanslick, etc. — in pamphlet and book form, for convenient reference. One would have to read many pages of Mark Twain or Artemus Ward to find in their conscious drollery so

much food for laughter as in the serious and elaborate arguments perpetrated by these German critics to prove to the ignorant and conceited Wagner that there *were* great men and real works of art before him. Names of authors and works are carefully given, and the argument usually closes with a defiant air of "Now then, Mr. Wagner, what do you say to that?"

So great, indeed, was the scandal produced by Wagner's speech, even at Bayreuth, that he found it necessary at a banquet, on Aug. 18, at which about seven hundred artists and visitors were present, to explain, in the course of a long address, what he had really meant by his epigrammatic utterance — a *new, German* art, free from foreign elements. Upon which Paul Lindau comments (*seriously!*) that "he explained that if he had said 'A,' he obviously had not meant 'A,' but something entirely different." Paul Lindau also explains what Wagner *should* have said, and would have said if he had not been the conceited and ungrateful wretch he was: —

"In this hour, when thousands from all parts of Germany and foreign countries had at his bidding travelled to a remote town, with sacrifices of time, money, comfort, rest, recreation, — in this hour the only word which must have welled from an overflowing artist-heart and forced itself through the lips, was a word of sincere, deep, inexpressible gratitude — of thanks to the artists, thanks to his faithful friends, who had tirelessly supported him, thanks to the public which had come at his call. . . . Like a shower-bath his words, cold, and without emotion or joy, fell on all of us. What! *Even yet not enough has been done for Wagner?* . . . Strange, most strange!"

Strange, most strange, indeed! Has Paul Lindau ever read the following remarks made by a certain German

poet, not entirely unknown to fame — Johann Wolfgang von Goethe — to Eckermann? — remarks which might have been made, without changing a word, by Richard Wagner at Bayreuth: —

"*My contemporaries have in truth never been satisfied with me, and always wanted to have me different from what it has pleased the Lord to make me. After I had labored months and years to please the world with a new work, I was called upon in addition to thank people for having found it as much as endurable. If I received praise, I was expected not to accept it as a tribute due to me, but to decline it with some modest phrase in which I humbly professed the utter unworthiness of my person and my work. That, however, my nature rebels against, and I would have had to be a miserable scamp to show myself as such a hypocrite and liar. But now, since I was firm enough to reveal my feelings just as they really were, I was pronounced proud, and am so considered to this day.*"

What a unique and delightful way the Germans have of treating their men of genius![1]

If Wagner did not take the opportunity of his "curtain-call" to thank the Germans for having kindly permitted him to spend twenty-five years of his life in adding a priceless jewel to their art-treasures; if he did not even thank his artists for having spent a few months of their life at a place where they could achieve more for their international fame in three weeks than in ten years at home, — it was because he expected to express his gratitude to these artists and to his various benefactors at the banquet following the recital. Here some touching and some humorous scenes were enacted. Among the former was his tribute to Liszt, whom he pointed out to the guests as the first who had had faith in him,

[1] I ought perhaps to add that Jullien's remarks on Wagner's speech (p. 238) are as funny as those of the German critics.

whereupon the two great artists embraced cordially; among the latter was the presentation, by Madame Lucca of Milan, of a silver laurel-wreath to Wagner, who playfully kept it on his head, and, in one of his gayest moods, arm in arm with Frau von Schleinitz, thus passed along the tables to greet his friends.

Concerning the second and third series of performances, nothing of special importance remains to be added except that they were of course an improvement on the first. The dates were, for the second cyclus, Aug. 20, 21, 22, 23; for the third, Aug. 27, 28, 29, 30. After the curtain had closed for the last time, King Ludwig jumped up from his seat, and led the applause. In a moment the whole house joined with bravos, clapping of hands, waving of hats and handkerchiefs, and calls for Wagner, who at last appeared before the curtain and was received with a shower of wreaths and bouquets, many of which, however, fell down into the "mystic abyss."[1] "The Bühnenfestspiele are ended; whether they will be repeated I know not," he commenced; then, after alluding to the purpose of the enterprise, and the reasons which had guided him in choosing the term "stage-festival-play," he spoke of his generous patron, the King, without whose kind interest they would not now be assembled for such a purpose, as well as of the late Karl Tausig, who had shown a way for the people to participate in making the Festival possible. But they who first enabled him to bring his production before the public, and thus to complete it, were the artists, and it was fitting that they should now show themselves. The

[1] The throwers miscalculated the distance — proving the correctness of Wagner's theory that the stage would seem nearer than it was.

curtain parted once more, disclosing the artists standing in a semicircle with Hans Richter in the middle, and at the sides Döppler and Brandt. To this circle Wagner once more directed his warmest thanks for their generous support, and bade them farewell. As the curtain closed, he was seen going around and shaking hands with them. The King, too, did not forget to reward the principal participants with orders and decorations, that are more valued by artists than the riches of Alberich. Thus ended the first Nibelung Festival. We must now turn to the Tetralogy itself.

THE NIBELUNG'S RING

DAS RHEINGOLD

WITH the discovery of gold the golden age came to an end: in these words we might indicate the keynote of the Prelude to the Trilogy, the action of which takes us back to the mythical time when the earth was shared by four kinds of beings,—gods, giants, dwarfs, and human beings. The gods dwelt in the cloud regions, the giants on the mountains, the dwarfs in the interior of the earth, and the men on the plains and in the forests. Although these different classes of beings were not always at peace with each other, the principal source of strife and discord — gold — had not yet manifested its curse. It still lay buried in the earth and under the water, and the most precious deposit of it, in the waters of the Rhine, has been put by the gods under the special protection of the three Rhine-daughters. It is placed on a high rock, difficult of access. To this Rhine-gold the Prelude introduces us.

Scene I. The stage, from above to the floor, represents a section of the Rhine; the water is continually flowing from right to left. It is almost dark. As the twilight gradually increases, rugged rocks are seen projecting from the bed of the river almost to its surface, and around these rocks the three Rhine-maidens are swimming, play-

fully endeavoring, amid snatches of song, to catch one another. In the meantime, Alberich, prince of the Nibelungs, or subterranean dwarfs, has emerged out of an abyss, and lustfully endeavors to catch one of the gambolling maidens. Each one in turn approaches him coquettishly, but darts out of his reach as soon as he fancies her secure. Suddenly his attention is attracted to a strange phenomenon. The sun has slowly emerged from behind the mountains, and its rays strike the Rhine-gold on the rock. The maidens, in an enchanting trio, greet the morning glitter of their treasure, and foolishly gratify the ugly dwarf's curiosity by telling him the secret of the gold — that the possessor of it, by forging it into a ring, could become ruler of the world. They are not afraid to reveal this secret to such an amorous being as Alberich; for, as they further inform him, only he who has utterly renounced love can remove the gold from the bosom of the Rhine. On hearing this, Alberich's lustful love immediately changes to the lust for gold and power. With terrible alacrity he climbs the cliff, and, cursing love, he snatches the gold and plunges into the depths below. The maidens pursue him, but with the disappearance of the gold total darkness has set in again, and nothing is heard but the laments of the Rhine-maidens mingled with the mocking laughter of Alberich.

Scene II. While the music continues without interruption, the darkened waters of the Rhine gradually change into cloud vapors, and presently the scene is transferred to a mountainous region, and we see the king of the gods, Wotan, and his wife Fricka, asleep on a grassy plot at the edge of a valley. Fricka awakes first, and

her look falls on a newly completed lofty castle on the hill before them. In order to assure himself the government of the world, and as a protection against enemies, Wotan had made a contract with the two giants, Fasolt and Fafner, to build this citadel, promising them, as a reward, Freia, the goddess of youth and beauty. He knew very well that on the presence of Freia among the gods depended their continued youth and health; but, relying on the cunning of the fire-god, Loge, to get him out of his scrape, he had never intended to keep his compact with the giants. While Fricka reproaches him for his rash contract, Freia suddenly appears, crying for help: the giants have come to claim their reward. When Wotan refuses it, they threaten violence. The gods, Froh and Donner (thunder) come to Freia's assistance, and the matter threatens to end in a fight. At this juncture Loge, the fire-god, returns; he had been sent to find something that the giants might be willing to take as a substitute for the beautiful woman promised them; but he relates that he has travelled all over the world, but nowhere had he found anything that was preferred to love and woman until that very morning, when he had heard of the Nibelung dwarf, Alberich, who had cursed love for the sake of the Rhine-gold. When the giants hear of the qualities of this gold, their lust is aroused, and they agree to take it as a substitute for Freia if the gods will procure it for them. Wotan accepts the offer, and sets out with Loge for Nibelheim, the home of the dwarfs, to see if he cannot, through the cunning of his friend, win the gold from Alberich. They disappear in a cleft between the rocks from which ascends a sulphurous vapor, which becomes more and more dense,

while the whole scene seems to sink until we arrive in the subterranean home of the dwarfs, Nibelheim, constituting

Scene III. Alberich, whose Ring has already enabled him to make all the other dwarfs his slaves, is seen dragging along his brother Mime by the ear to compel him to give up the Tarnhelm, or magic helmet, which he, the best of the smiths, had been commanded to make. Mime does not know that the possessor of this helmet can, by putting it on, make himself invisible, or change himself into any form he pleases; he finds this out to his cost when Alberich makes himself invisible, and belabors him with a whip for having tried to keep the Tarnhelm; whereupon his voice is heard in the distance abusing his Nibelung slaves. Loge and Wotan appear. Mime complains to them how Alberich compels all the other dwarfs to toil in the rocks day and night in order to win gold for him. Alberich returns and angrily asks the two gods what they are after. Loge craftily leads him to speak of the Ring and the Tarnhelm, and to describe their magic qualities. Loge pretends to doubt these; to convince him, Alberich changes himself first into a large snake, then into a toad: at this moment Wotan puts his foot on him, Loge snatches the helmet from his head, and Alberich lies there, in his real form, in the power of the gods, who fetter him and drag him away into captivity.

Scene IV. is the same as Scene II. Alberich lies in the foreground, his hands tied. Wotan commands him to summon the dwarfs to bring up all the gold accumulated in Nibelheim, to serve as a ransom for Freia. The dwarf most reluctantly obeys; the Nibelungs appear,

carrying the treasures. Alberich hopes to get back his Tarnhelmet with his freedom, but to his great rage Wotan throws that too on the pile, and finally demands the Ring which Alberich has on his finger — the Ring which ensures supreme power in the world. The dwarf declares he will sooner part with his life; but the Ring is taken from him by force. He is then restored to freedom, but before leaving he curses the Ring: ruin and death shall it bring to him who wears it until it is returned to the one who had it forged for him. The giants appear again with Freia, whom they had kept as security. They want as much gold as is sufficient to cover the goddess entirely. The gold is piled around her, but there is not enough to quite cover her head, so Wotan is compelled, much to his chagrin, to add the Tarnhelm. Yet still Fasolt is able to see one of Freia's eyes. He demands the Ring to fill up the gap. Wotan obstinately refuses, until the giants seize the unhappy Freia and drag her away. Suddenly a weird blue light appears in a cavern on one side. Erda, the mother of the Fates, the seeress of the future, appears, and warns Wotan to give up the Ring which will lead to his ruin: —

> "All that is, endeth.
> A gloomy day
> Dawns for the gods.
> The Ring, I warn you, avoid."

Wotan is awed by this threat of the *Götterdämmerung*, — the decline of the gods, — and gives up the Ring to the giants. Its curse shows itself immediately. Fafner had intended to marry Freia; Fasolt now claims that his turn had come — that the gold is his. But Fafner fells

him with a blow of his staff, fills his sack with the gold and disappears to transform himself, with the aid of the Tarnhelm, into a dragon, as which he lies in a cavern to guard the gold. Donner now ascends a cliff, and strikes the rock with his hammer. A brilliant flash of lightning is followed by a deafening thunder-clap. The dark clouds which had shut off the sight of the new citadel, are dispelled, and a rainbow bridges the Rhine. The gods march slowly over this bridge to their burg, which Wotan calls the *Walhalla;* while below is heard the mournful song of the Rhine-maidens, lamenting the loss of their gold.

Even this brief outline of the plot of ***Rheingold,*** in which many interesting details have been omitted, must convince the reader that seldom has there been a drama in which there are so many and such strange things to see, and such a brisk and varied action. I remember that the native Bayreuthers were more eager to see ***Rheingold*** than any other Nibelung drama, so much had they been impressed with the tales of the water-maidens in the Rhine, the glittering Nibelung caves, the novel transformation of the scenes with steam in place of curtains, and, above all, Donner's wonderful storm — the dazzling flash of zigzag lightning on the black clouds. In no other opera-house — and I have seen ***Rheingold*** in most of the German cities — has this storm scene ever been equalled. Carl Brandt certainly deserved the jocular compliment Wagner paid him one day at Bayreuth after a storm which, he declared, "had been as successful as if Brandt had superintended it."

How delightful it is for persons of poetic sensibility

to follow the composer of *Rheingold* in deserting the artificial life of operatic drawing-rooms and cities for the glories and wonders of nature! Rivers, caverns, mountains, clouds, storms — how infinitely more impressive they are as backgrounds to a tragedy than the narrow walls of a room, the dirty streets of a city! What a relief, for persons of imaginative temperament, to get away, for a change, from everlasting man and his petty cares, in order to watch the doings of gods, giants, and dwarfs, the denizens of nature; to breathe the atmosphere of forest and mountain in place of the stupefying fumes of our hot-house furnaces! How amusing it was, after the Bayreuth Festival, to watch the antics of the poor, pampered, green-house critics; how they whined to get back behind their stoves, to their musty haunts; how they shivered in the rare and bracing air of Wotan's mountain-top, in Alberich's cave.

It is one of the greatest charms of the Nibelung Tetralogy, this return to nature, to elemental forces, human as well as physical, which music is so much better suited to illustrate than the commonplace woes and joys of tenors and sopranos. In all the other dramas of the Tetralogy we find this preference for out-door scenes — especially in *Siegfried*. And how realistic all these scenes are — what an artist-imagination Wagner showed in conceiving them! How anxious he was not to misrepresent the phenomena of nature is shown in an anecdote related by the "Idealistin," referred to in previous pages.

"The spring (1861) was wonderfully fine in Paris. One night a violent thunder-storm arose, and in the morning, as by a stroke of magic, the trees of the Champs Elysées, the gardens and bushes,

burst forth in the fresh shimmer of their first green. Wagner told me that this phenomenon had pleased him very much. For in *Rheingold*, Donner strikes the rock, whereupon the clouds gather for a storm, and when they roll by again, Walhalla and the earth are adorned with the beauty of spring. Now that very night doubts had arisen in his mind as to whether this was permissible. Consequently he was much gratified by what he saw in the morning."

In the preface to his Nibelung Poems he pointed out that *Rheingold* would give the stage carpenters and machinists an opportunity to show that their profession is a real *art*. The problems here presented are so difficult that even at Bayreuth some of them were not successfully solved. In other places, as a rule, no real attempt has been made to carry out Wagner's picturesque plans, the consequence being that *Rheingold* is much less popular than the other parts of the Tetralogy. "Oho!" I hear an adversary shout, "then you admit that the success of *Rheingold* depends largely on its scenery!" Of course I do, you ignorant fellow. You do not seem to know the very alphabet of Wagnerism — the fact that in the "art-work of the future," music, action, and scenery are to be of equal importance. It is almost impossible to get this simple idea into some people's heads — that Wagner's dramas are not to be judged, like "operas," by their music, their "tunes," alone. He wrote acts, and even a whole work (*Tristan*), in which the music is much more important than the scene. Conversely, in *Rheingold*, the scenery, with all the delightful phenomena of nature which form part of it, is, if not more important than the music or the action, at least equally so. Now, operatic managers, knowing that *Rheingold* is less popular than the *Walküre*, expend much less money on it than

on other operas, so that the scenery *looks* just about as the score would sound if it were played by a strolling brass band. I am convinced that if *Rheingold* were brought out with the scenic splendor lavished, *e.g.*, in Dresden or Bayreuth on the Paris version of *Tannhäuser*, it would become exceedingly popular; and such a production would make clear the fact that the imagination displayed in the *Rheingold* scenes alone suffices to stamp Wagner as the greatest artist in that field the world has ever seen.

The very opening of *Rheingold* shows most vividly what an important element artistic scenery is in the real music-drama. When the curtain is first parted, nothing definite is seen on the darkened stage, and the music is equally indefinite — a bass note, deep as the Rhine, on which the constituent notes of the chord of E flat major undulate up and down on the different instruments for 135 bars, — monotonous as the flow of the water, yet slowly gaining in volume as the rising sun's light gradually increases, and the movement of the swimming maidens is felt in the water. Now this music, in the concert-hall, would be utterly meaningless — a mere acoustic puzzle; whereas as an accompaniment of this subaqueous scene it is simply delightful — a musical mirror of the visible scene which immediately attunes every hearer's mood to the situation. Who can fail to see here the advantage which the music-drama has over the symphony, or over the drama without music? And when, in the 136th bar, the orchestra makes the first modulation to A flat, this simple harmonic change produces a thrilling effect; Wagner has shown here, as in many other places, how absurd is the charge that he

always employs strange harmonies and constant modulations to produce a dramatic impression.[1]

Nothing need be said here of the engrossing and virile *Rheingold* poem, as a separate chapter will be given to Wagner's poetry at the end of this volume. Musically the most remarkable thing about this work is that it is the longest piece of uninterrupted music ever written. Symphonic movements rarely last longer than fifteen or twenty minutes. There are operatic acts lasting over an hour; but *Rheingold*, if given as it should be, lasts about two hours and a half without a single stop. Outside of Bayreuth it has been found advisable to make a short intermission, but in this way the charm of one of the scenic changes is lost.[2]

Owing to the order in which Wagner's works were first produced, and are now always arranged whenever a "chronological cyclus" of all his dramas is given, an impression naturally prevails that the *Nibelung's Ring* is the last of his creations, excepting *Parsifal*. This is true of the *Götterdämmerung;* but it must be remembered that *Rheingold*, *Walküre*, and a large portion of *Siegfried* were composed before *Tristan* and the *Meistersinger*. It is only when we bear in mind that *Rheingold* followed *Lohengrin*, that we fully realize its novelty of style,

[1] In Vol. X., p. 243, may be found some instructive remarks on the proper use of modulations, *à propos* of this Prelude. It may be added that in order to do this scene to musical perfection the long bass note (pedal-point) should be strengthened, as it was at Bayreuth, by an organ tone. This will be easier than to provide the six harps which at Bayreuth added so much to the color of the rainbow scene.

[2] It is not generally known that the *Flying Dutchman* also had been originally intended as a one-act opera (VII. 120), but the plan was abandoned, probably when it was found that the score was becoming too long.

which makes it inaugurate Wagner's third period. The transition seems, however, less abrupt when we compare *Rheingold*, not with *Lohengrin* as a whole, but only with its second act, which was composed after the third, and in which the "third style" is foreshadowed in a way that long made this second act caviare to the public. Between the last scene of *Lohengrin* and the first of *Rheingold* lies a most important phase in the development of their composer's mind. In June, 1845, shortly after completing *Tannhäuser*, he wrote to his friend Gaillard in Berlin: —

"I have made up my mind to be idle a whole year, *i.e.* to use my library, without producing anything, to which unhappily I am already impelled again, since a new subject fascinates me greatly; but I shall force myself away from it, in the first place because I should like yet to learn many a thing, and secondly because I have arrived at the conviction that if a dramatic work is to have marrowy significance and originality, it must be the outcome of a decided advance in life, of a certain important epoch in the artist's development; such an advance — such an epoch, however, does not come every six months."

Now between the end of the *Lohengrin* sketches and the beginning of the *Rheingold* sketches six years had elapsed. And during these six years his art principles had assumed definite theoretical shape in his mind. It is not true, as his opponents have said a thousand times, that these art principles were the result of abstract reflection; on the contrary, from the first act of the *Dutchman* to the second of *Lohengrin* his peculiar method of dramatic composition had been slowly developed, and gradually assumed the *quasi-Nibelung* phase of the duet between Ortrud and Telramund. The only difference

between this scene and *Rheingold* is that in the latter he *consciously* used a method of composition which in his earlier works had gradually and irresistibly forced itself on him *unconsciously*, in the heat of inspiration.

That, in my opinion, the swing of the pendulum carried him a little too far in making him exclude the chorus almost entirely from the *Nibelung's Ring*, was stated in an earlier chapter. But how delightfully this omission is atoned for in *Rheingold* by the two trios of the Rhine-maidens, the first when they greet the awakening of the gold in the morning sun, the second at the close, when they lament the loss of their treasure! And how, in other respects, the progress in Wagner's art compensates for the loss of choral effects and the "tunefulness" of the vocal parts! What progress over all other composers in the art of *vocal characterization!* Compare, for instance, the song of the Rhine-maidens, crystalline and undulating like their element, with the heavy, coarse, utterances of the giants, or the weird, unearthly tones of Erda; or Wotan's dignified, majestic utterances, with the impish, clownish, peevish tones of Mime. Here, at last, we have the true art of dramatic vocalism. And how the orchestra intensifies this characterization, in a manner far surpassing all preceding operas! Where, in the whole range of music can you find anything so vividly realistic and almost pictorial as the heavy, clumsy, awkward motive of the giants; or anything so flickering and flaming as the fire-god's motive; or anything so weird and mystic as the motive of the magic Tarnhelmet; or any chords so sublime in their simple majesty as the Walhalla motive? No less characteristic and suggestive are the other leading motives in *Rheingold*, which con-

tains thirty-five of the whole number of ninety that Hans von Wolzogen has traced in his well-known Thematic Guide of the *Nibelung's Ring*. The *Rheingold* motives of course recur in the dramas following it whenever the dramatic ideas associated with them recur. Most of them, indeed, do not receive their full development till we come to the later dramas, but several grow at once from the bud into the full blossom, and what glorious blossoms they are!

To a musician and an intelligent amateur these motives, and the ingenious and truly inspired manner in which they are used, either to color a present scene or as reminiscences or prophecies, afford an endless source of delight and study. Saint-Saëns, the profoundest musical scholar France has produced, who attended the first Bayreuth Festival, wrote, nine years later, that his admiration for *Rheingold* "has never ceased growing."

"When one reads this score," he says, "when one has seen this marvellous jeweller's work, one has some difficulty in noting all the chasing relegated *au dernier plan* and sacrificed to the general effect. Wagner has imitated the mediæval artists who sculptured a cathedral as minutely as they would have decorated furniture."

There is another point to which Saint-Saëns refers — the old charge that Wagner's music is noisy, advanced usually by people who really delight in the cymbals, drums, and cornets that make many of the old-fashioned operas hideous: "It is certain that the least operetta makes more noise than *Rheingold*." Tappert, indeed, has taken the pains to ascertain that in the *first movement* of Beethoven's C minor symphony there are 258 bars marked *ff*, while in the *whole* of *Rheingold* there are only 236 marked *ff* and *fff*. Nor is *Rheingold* exceptional in

this respect, and a drama justifies loud music more than a symphony. To the loudest bars in *Rheingold* I should like to call the reader's attention specially. They occur in the scene where the Nibelung dwarfs, after having deposited their burdens of gold on the upper world, file past the fettered Alberich, their former tyrant, and impertinently leer in his face. The furious, cyclonic orchestral outburst which here conveys the mute Alberich's feelings to the audience, illustrates one of the tremendous advantages which the music-drama has over the literary or spoken drama. Attention may also be called to the fine realistic effect produced in this work by "noise," the hissing steam, and the eighteen tuned anvils that are heard while Wotan and Loge are approaching the subterranean smithies of the Nibelung dwarfs.[1]

DIE WALKÜRE

By his foolish and criminal actions, as witnessed in *Rheingold*, Wotan has involved himself and the rest of the gods in a serious dilemma which threatens their destruction. It must be understood that the old German and Scandinavian gods are not omnipotent nor even immortal; although their lives are ages longer than those of mortals, they are doomed to die, while their rule over men, giants, and dwarfs is conditioned upon their justice, and upon a regular contract, the terms of which are written on Wotan's spear. The building of the stronghold, Walhalla, which was intended to secure the gods from attacks, has proved the entering wedge of their

[1] Hueffer, in his brief but valuable Wagner biography (85–96), points out some of the humorous and other touches in the miniature chiselling of this score.

ruin; for it has led Wotan to a series of crimes and violations of justice: he has lusted for the gold belonging to the Rhine-maidens; he has tried to break his contract with the giants; he has used treachery and violence towards Alberich; and he has worn the fatal Ring cursed by the Nibelung. Now, the fundamental tragic idea of Wagner's drama, in harmony with the spirit of the ancient myth, is, as Professor Köstlin has concisely summed it up,[1] that "everything, even the highest (the gods), even the noblest (Siegfried and Brünnhilde) perishes, if it allows anything to persuade it to resort to violence, either open or secret (cunning, treachery), instead of relying on Love, the only bond that holds things together."

The dilemma of the gods is this: they must not try to get back the cursed Ring, for Erda has warned them that its possession will entail their ruin; but if they leave it to the stupid giant Fafner, there is danger that the crafty Alberich will recover it; and he has already threatened that in that case the gods and goddesses shall become his slaves, like the Nibelungs. Out of this dilemma only one way seems to lead: the Ring must get into the hands of some one whom the gods need not fear. But he must be a free agent, for Wotan cannot aid him directly without incurring new guilt and danger by breaking his compact with Fafner. However, as long as the Ring is in the possession of that transformed giant, the gods are safe, for Fafner is too stupid to care for more than the mere possession of the Ring. As long as no dangerous enemy has the Ring, the gods are safe enough in their new citadel. To make this more of a stronghold

[1] *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, Tübingen, 1877, p. 33.

still, Wotan consorts with Erda, who bears him nine maidens, the Valkyries, whose mission it is to incite mortals to combat and then convey the fallen heroes on their steeds to Walhalla, to form its guard.

Having thus provided for present safety, Wotan takes measures for the future. He goes to the earth and, uniting himself with a mortal woman, he founds the formidable race of the Volsungs. The twins, Siegmund and Sieglinde are born, and Siegmund is chosen by Wotan as the agent who, being a demi-god, would be strong enough to win the Ring from Fafner, yet harmless to the gods after he had secured it. But being unable, on account of his compacts, to aid his hero directly, Wotan is obliged to leave him to his own devices. His sister, Sieglinde, is carried off by the enemy and married to Hunding against her will, and one day, Siegmund, on returning to his haunts, finds nothing but an empty wolf-skin and believes his father dead too. Alone he now engages with his formidable foes, to protect a woman from wrong; but his weapon is destroyed and he has to flee for his life. This brings us to the opening scene.

Act I. Hunding's hut; a violent storm is raging. Siegmund, overcome with fatigue, enters and sinks down at the hearth. Sieglinde soon comes in, sees the stranger, whom she does not know (for the twins had been separated in infancy) and offers him food and drink. A noise at the door interrupts their conversation. Hunding has returned. He asks his guest's name. Siegmund's story reveals the fact that Hunding belongs to the tribe which has sworn vengeance on him. Hunding tells him he may stay that night, but in the morning he must fight. Sieglinde, at the command of her husband,

had preceded him to their bed-chamber, but she soon returns, tells Siegmund that she has given her husband a sleeping potion, and urges him to flee. In the centre of the room grows a mighty ash-tree and in its trunk glimmers the hilt of a sword. Sieglinde tells her guest that one day a stranger, of impressive appearance, had come into the room when there was an assembly, and thrust in that sword, promising it to him who could pull it out. But so far no one had succeeded. Then follows a love-scene, which is one of the most beautiful in all dramatic literature, and the musical part is no less perfect. The two discover that they are brother and sister, and that the stranger who put the sword in the tree was no one else than their father, Wotan, who had promised Siegmund that in an hour of need he should find a sword, called Nothung, with which he could overcome everything. Siegmund draws out the sword, and the two embrace each other with a love that is more than that of kindred.

Act II. Wotan in a wild mountain region gives orders to Brünnhilde, his best beloved Valkyrie, to protect Siegmund in the coming contest with Hunding. As Brünnhilde disappears beyond the rocks, Wotan's wife, Fricka, appears on her chariot drawn by two goats. She has been called upon by Hunding to avenge the injury to his honor done by Siegmund; and now follows a long scene in which Fricka demands that Wotan shall not protect the guilty couple. Wotan for a long time refuses to thwart his own plans, but at last he is obliged to yield to the entreaties of his wife, and promises not to protect Siegmund, and to prevent Brünnhilde also from doing so. Fricka leaves, and Brünnhilde returns. She finds

her father in a terribly despondent state of mind. He tells her of the impending downfall of the gods and of his frustrated plans of overcoming the enemy with the aid of the Valkyries and of Siegmund. But he must yield, and she shall not defend Siegmund. Brünnhilde proposes, in spite of Wotan's command, to protect him, but this arouses the anger of Wotan, and he threatens her with the most dreadful punishment if she does not obey. They leave the stage, and Siegmund appears again with Sieglinde, in flight. Sieglinde bitterly accuses herself and falls in a swoon. As Siegmund bends over her, Brünnhilde reappears and tells him that he must fall in the coming contest, but that she will herself take him to Walhalla, the abode of the gods. But Siegmund does not wish to go; he cannot think of leaving Sieglinde. In despair, he draws the sword on her, when the Valkyrie is moved to pity and promises to protect him and to save their offspring. The voice of the approaching Hunding is heard. Siegmund rushes up into the clouds to meet him. They fight, while Brünnhilde holds her protecting shield over Siegmund. Already the latter has drawn his sword, "Nothung," to inflict the deadly blow on his opponent, when suddenly, amid thunder and lightning, Wotan appears, and with his spear catches the blow of the sword, which breaks into pieces, while Hunding slays his defenceless opponent. Brünnhilde gathers the fragments of the sword for Sieglinde; they shall be united again for her son. But Hunding falls dead before a contemptuous motion of Wotan's hand.

Act III. Summit of a rocky mountain. Amid brilliant flashes of lightning the eight Valkyries, in succession, ride through the clouds on their white steeds, and

land on the rocks. They are joined by Brünnhilde, who with Sieglinde is trying to escape the wrath of Wotan for having defended Siegmund. But the Valkyries dread his anger, while Sieglinde confesses her unworthiness of their protection, and her willingness to die. Brünnhilde, however, beseeches her to live for the sake of her offspring, the child which will be born, and induces her to continue her flight, while she stays to abide the anger of Wotan. The god appears and demands Brünnhilde. She comes forward and confesses her guilt, yet believes she has acted according to his inmost wishes; she asks what her punishment will be. Wotan first sends away the other Valkyries, and then announces to his maiden daughter that she shall no longer be a Valkyrie and bring fallen heroes to Walhalla, but shall be laid on the rock, fast asleep, and shall become the wife of the first man who finds and awakens her. Brünnhilde falls on her knees and entreats him in the most imploring tones not to inflict such cruel punishment, or at least to grant her one last prayer, and that is to surround her resting-place with an ever-burning sea of flames, so that none but the most valiant hero could awake her. Wotan is overcome with pity and consents. He fondly embraces her once more, then lays her down on the moss, covers her with shield and helmet, and strikes the rock with his spear. Flames dart up on all sides, surrounding the rock, and the drama ends with the words of Wotan: "Who fears the tip of my spear, never shall pass through this fire." He slowly retires into the background, leaving the sleeping maiden alone on the flame-encircled rock.

Schopenhauer wrote on the margin of his copy of the Nibelung poem that in the *Walküre* "clouds play the

leading rôle." In epigrammatic brevity this indicates that, like its predecessor, the *Walküre* is an open-air play, a drama of Nature. Only in the first act are we in a human habitation, and even there the most conspicuous thing is the large tree around which Hunding's hut is built; and long before the act is over the back door opens and reveals a spring landscape in the light of the full moon. In the second act we are in a wild mountainous region. Before and during the duel scene one needs no music to be carried along by the excitement of the poem, in which occur such directions as these (which alas! have never been half-way carried out as conceived, not even at Bayreuth): —

"The stage has gradually become dark; heavy stormclouds sink down over the background and gradually and completely veil the walls of rock, the ravine, and the high ridge." "Siegmund disappears on the ridge in the dark stormcloud." "Strong lightning flashes through the clouds; a terrible thunder-clap wakes Sieglinde." "A flash for a moment lightens the ridge on which Hunding and Siegmund are now seen fighting."

And so on — the orchestra all the time mirroring and vivifying these phenomena. In the third act we are again in a rough mountainous region, where the wild Valkyries, one after another, approach amid the clouds on their war-steeds; and at the close the natural solitude is only emphasized by the sleeping maiden. Taken as a whole, I do not think the *Walküre* as fine a poem as *Siegfried* or as pregnant in language and absorbing in interest as *Rheingold:* the dialogues in the second act are doubtless somewhat too extended and delay the action too long. Yet how perfect is the opening scene of the drama, when the weary Siegmund enters the hut! how

exciting the pursuit of the guilty lovers by Hunding! how his horn makes the flesh creep! How touching is the scene where Brünnhilde is "elevated," as has been finely said, "from a goddess to a woman," when pity for the fugitive condemned lovers induces her to face Wotan's anger by her efforts to save them! How pathetic, again, the last scenes — the heart-rending accents of the condemned Valkyrie, so mournfully emphasized by the plaintive woodwind accompaniment, and Wotan's touching farewell! If in *Rheingold* the chief of the gods excites our interest rather than our sympathy, here, where his expiation begins, we feel with him the pang of the sorrow that overcomes him at having to punish his favorite daughter for having carried out his secret wishes.

Concerning one scene in the *Walküre* enough has been written to fill many stout volumes. On no other ground has its author been so virulently assailed as for his audacity in making the hero and heroine of this opera guilty of adultery and incest at the same time. I, myself, believe that he did not gain any dramatic advantage by following the old Edda legend in this detail. To be sure, only in this way could Siegfried come of divine stock on both sides, but the incest might at least have been made unconscious. However, the poet might have replied that in Rome we must do as the Romans do: if we bring mythical beings on the stage we must leave them their morals as well as their manners. The Greek gods intermarry within the forbidden relationship; the Egyptian Pharaohs married their sisters, and many primitive peoples did and do the same. As for the charge of adultery, that is not admitted in this drama. Wagner does not

concede that there can be a true marriage without love. Sieglinde was carried off forcibly by Hunding; she was overwhelmed; that is not marriage. The point is argued at length in the text by Wotan; at greater length still in the original version of the poem, which was abbreviated by 126 lines when it was set to music. It must be said, too, that hypocrisy, prudery, and a desire to hit Wagner had more to do with the attacks on this scene than any feelings of outraged morality. This is what the Rev. Dr. Haweis told some of the English censors. I have in my notebooks a few brief quotations which put the whole question in a nutshell: —

"An episode found in all mythologies may well be pardoned for the sake of the exquisite music it has inspired" (*London Times*, July 2, 1892). "I cannot share the moral indignation over the incestuous relationship between Siegmund and Sieglinde. When we read the story in the poem, — well, yes, it seems rather questionable, but in the scenic execution it is entirely discreet; no offence can be taken at it" (Paul Lindau, *Nüchterne Briefe*). "Those who hold mythological beings to as strict a moral account as they do people of to-day, can imagine that the lovers were strangers or second-cousins or anything else — only let them stop preaching" (Gustav Kobbé, *The Ring of the Nibelung*). "Who has ever been shocked at the amours of the Greek divinities on account of their being within the forbidden degrees of relationship, or at the intermarriage of the children of Adam and Eve which the Pentateuch implies?" (F. Hueffer, *Wagner*).

Finally, I would beg those funny critics who deny the author of the *Nibelung's Ring* poetic sensibility and refinement because he brings such wicked gods and men on the stage, to read this remark of Max Müller's regarding the Greeks: "Their poets had an instinctive aversion to everything excessive or monstrous, yet they

would relate of their gods what would make the most savage of Red Indians creep and shudder" (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, art. "Mythology"). And the moral of this whole moral discussion is that a little less "morality" in modern criticisms would be a moral gain. The moral feelings of the *people* are all right, and on the poet's side. Is there one person in a whole *Walküre* audience who does not instinctively detest Fricka for a tiresome intermeddler, and hope that Siegmund may win in the battle with Hunding? This argument alone, which was suggested to me by one of the purest and most refined women in the world, weighs more than all the prudish comments put together.

The impotence of critical hypocrisy and malice against Genius is vividly illustrated by the fact that, in Germany, *Die Walküre* has become by far the most popular of the four Nibelung dramas. It owes this largely to its music, which is richer and more stirring than that of *Rheingold*. I do not agree with Ehlert that the first act of the *Walküre* is the finest act ever written by its composer. To me each of the three acts of *Siegfried*, as well as the last act of *Götterdämmerung*, seem greater, more perfect. But I willingly concede the wondrous beauties of this first act. The very Introduction is as marvellous in its way as the calm aqueous *Rheingold* prelude, to which it forms a complete antithesis. Never has storm been so vividly painted in such a few strokes. The agitated tremolos and runs of the violins depict the rainstorm fiercely beating on the roof of Hunding's hut, while the low growling of the thunder is first muttered by the double-basses, until finally the whole orchestra breaks out into a fierce tornado of sound, in the crashing

climax of which is heard the reverberation of the motive of the storm-god, known to the hearer from *Rheingold*. It is a masterpiece, more vivid and naturalistic than even the storm music in the *Dutchman*. Repeatedly, in hearing Hans Richter or Anton Seidl conduct this storm, I have had a curious feeling as if the lightning had really struck the band, and the instruments were carried away by the storm in all directions, still sounding!

How utterly different, yet equally fine, is the tender eloquence of the quintet for violoncellos which we hear when Sieglinde gives Siegmund the cooling drink. It was no doubt this passage among others that led Saint-Saëns to pay this tribute to Wagner's orchestration: —

"When the actors are silent, the orchestra speaks, and what a language! Wagner, the man of noise, the tamer of ferocious instruments, employs here nothing but string instruments. By the manner in which a composer makes the string quartet speak, the master is shown. The goddess reveals herself as such by her bearing."

How superb is the orchestral outburst when Siegmund triumphantly draws the sword from the tree! But it is needless to call attention to all the gems; spectators can see their glitter for themselves, as easily as the glitter of the sword-hilt when the orchestra tells us what it is; to others they cannot be described. Concerning the passionate love-scene which forms the climax of this act I beg leave again to quote Saint-Saëns: —

"Here nothing would have prevented the composer from writing an air and a duo in the traditional style; but no air, no duo, could have, from a theatrical point of view, the value of this monologue and this dialogue scene. Melodic flowers of the most exquisite fragrance spring up at every step, and the orchestra, like a bound-

less ocean, rocks the two lovers on its magic waves. Here we have the theatre of the future; neither the opera nor the simple drama will ever rouse such deep emotions in the soul. If the composer had completely succeeded in no other scene but this, it would suffice to prove that his ideal is not an impracticable dream: the cause has been heard. A thousand critics writing each a thousand lines a day for ten years would injure this work about as much as a child's breath would go towards overthrowing the pyramids of Egypt."

Lest I be accused of indiscriminate admiration, I will admit here that there are blemishes in the *Walküre;* some of the dialogues are (under ordinary operatic conditions) too long. All music-dramas and operas, whoever their composer may be, would be better (for all *practical* purposes) if they had been originally written to last only three hours instead of four or more. There are also weak spots in the score. The weakest of these is the famous love-song of Siegmund in the scene just referred to. The poetic lines are beautiful, but the melody is trivial and shallow. I confess to a positive dislike for this brief love-song, which seems to me a cheap tune, as unworthy of Wagner's genius as the *Lohengrin* Wedding March. Its chopped-up, four-bar rhythm contrasts painfully with the flowing, continuous, uncadenced melody of the rest of the score.

At Bayreuth it was amusing to note how some of the critical babes, who had been crying for their toys (Paul Lindau was positively pathetic: "I beg, I beg you, dear little birds, for a tune"), rejoiced at Siegmund's love-song, because *that* was something they could whistle, give to the organ-grinders, and work up in the next carnival quadrille. But Lindau was not quite satisfied with having an old-fashioned tune; he also wanted it

And at last the Magic Fire Scene, in which "the violins flame, the harps crackle, the timbres scintillate. The *Walküre* ends with a tableau which is a feast for the ears and for the eyes," the famous French composer exclaims. And how much more effective, I may add, is this tableau, without any song at all, simply a sleeping Valkyrie, on a flame-encircled rock — and an orchestra quietly combining the Brünnhilde and flame music — than the final chorus which before Wagner used to be considered absolutely necessary to give an opera a sufficiently noisy conclusion!

SIEGFRIED, THE FOREST DRAMA

Sieglinde, after Brünnhilde had been compelled, by the pursuit of the angry Wotan, to abandon her, wandered about in the forest until she was found by the dwarf Mime. She died in giving birth to Siegfried, and intrusted him to the care of Mime, to whom, at the same time, she gave the fragments of the sword Nothung, with the information that through it the Nibelung's Ring could be recovered from the dragon, Fafner. Mime brings up young Siegfried, not from love of him, but in the hope of becoming through him the possessor of the Ring. Mime knows the location of Fafner's cave, and his one desire is to kill the Dragon and recover the Ring. He is too cowardly to attack him, however, and his only hope lies in his foster-child, now a robust youth of twenty, full of animal spirits and courage, whose companions are the birds and beasts of the forest, and who has never seen any human being except the ugly dwarf. Mime has made several swords for Siegfried to slay the Dragon with, "strong enough for giants"; but the mus-

cular youth has dashed them all to pieces on the anvil, as if they had been so many toy swords.

Act I. It is this "ungrateful boy" that Mime complains about when we behold him, in the opening scene, in his rock-surrounded forest smithy. Presently, to his terror, Siegfried rushes in with a live bear, with which he pursues and teases him. Then he inquires about the new sword which Mime has been forging for him. After examining it critically, he breaks it to pieces on the anvil, and abuses the smith for his incompetence. Mime reproaches him for ingratitude, and tells him a most pitiful tale of how he has fostered and fed him, and toiled for him only to be maltreated in return. But Siegfried is unable to conceal his aversion to the ugly dwarf. He refuses to believe that Mime is his father, for in his forest life he has noticed that young animals always resemble their parents, whereas his own face, when he saw it reflected in the brooks, certainly did not in any way resemble Mime's; angered by the dwarf's evasive answers, he seizes him by the throat and makes him tell the truth about his parentage. When he is shown the fragments of the magic Nothung, he commands Mime to forge them into a new sword, and rushes out into the forest, leaving the dwarf in perfect despair, for he has often tried to forge these pieces into a sword, but found them so hard that all his arts were useless.

As he cowers down by the anvil, a stranger enters, whose face is partly covered with a broad hat.[1] It is

[1] Under a costume sketch of Wotan, now in Oesterlein's Wagner Museum at Vienna, Wagner has written: "full brown hair and beard, no helmet, but a large soft felt hat, which will become picturesque by being worn sidewise on the head."

Wotan, who has been wandering about the face of the earth, and now, disguised as the "Wanderer," comes to supervise, as far as he may, the fate of his grandson Siegfried, who is to recover the Ring from the Dragon. He claims the hospitality of Mime's hearth, offering his advice on any question in return; but Mime says he needs no advice. At last he consents to ask the stranger three questions, and be asked three in return; the one who fails to answer all three shall forfeit his head. To the questions of Mime: Who dwells in the bowels of the earth? who on the face of the earth? who on the cloudy heights? Wotan answers, respectively, the dwarfs, the giants, and the gods. Mime then answers two questions correctly, but fails at the third: "Who will reforge the sword Nothung?" Wotan supplies the answer. "He alone who has never felt fear can fashion Nothung anew." Then he adds, before leaving: —

> "Thy crafty head
> keep if thou canst,
> as forfeit it falls to him
> who fear has never yet felt."

Siegfried returns, and is very indignant on finding that Mime has not succeeded in welding together the fragments of the sword. He calls him a bungler, and then tries his own hand at the task. He starts the fire and the bellows, files the sword into pieces, melts them in a crucible, pours the mass into a long mould, and plunges it into the water. Then he hammers the red-hot steel, and when the sword is finished, he brandishes it, and with one mighty blow cleaves the anvil in twain, to Mime's mingled delight and consternation.

Act II. Scene: in the depths of a forest near the

Dragon Fafner's den. It is almost dark. Alberich is continually in that neighborhood, watching an opportunity to steal the Ring and Tarnhelmet from Fafner. Wotan meets him and tells him that Siegfried is on his way to slay the Dragon. Alberich replies with volleys of abuse. Wotan mockingly asks him to propose to Fafner to let him have the Ring, in return for the information that his life is threatened through Siegfried. He proceeds to awake the Dragon, who answers from the depths of his cavern with a stentorian voice that he is willing the hero should come; that he is hungry for such a morsel. Then he yawns and bids the men not to disturb his sleep any longer. Wotan disappears in a storm wind, and Alberich conceals himself, for he sees Mime coming with Siegfried. Mime, intimidated by Wotan's prophecy about the "fearless hero," has resolved that Siegfried must see the Dragon at once and learn the emotion of fear. If Siegfried should not learn to fear, and should succeed in killing the Dragon, Mime has resolved to save his own head all the same, and secure the Ring too, by poisoning Siegfried after the deed. So he leaves him alone. Siegfried lies down under a large tree and listens to the song of the birds and the rustling of the forest leaves. He wonders what the birds are saying, and cuts a reed on which he tries to imitate them, so as to learn their language; but the result is a grotesque failure. Impatiently he seizes his horn and sounds a long and merry call. This wakes up the Dragon, who seems delighted to see Siegfried, for he is hungry.

After some preliminary banter a terrible fight ensues, and Fafner receives a mortal wound. Some of the Dragon's blood is sprinkled on Siegfried's finger. It

burns, and he puts it involuntarily to his lips. This gives him suddenly the power of understanding the language of the birds. He listens, and one of them tells him to go into the cave and get the valuable Ring. After he has retired, Mime and Alberich arrive and quarrel as to who shall have the Ring and the Tarnhelmet. When Siegfried returns, the bird warns him against Mime's murderous intentions, but this was unnecessary, as the tasting of the Dragon's blood has enabled Siegfried to hear Mime's thoughts in place of his words. So when Mime, after many murderous compliments, offers his poisoned bowl, Siegfried takes his sword and kills him with a blow. Again he listens to the bird, which tells him of the beautiful Valkyrie, asleep on the fire-surrounded rock. Then it flies away, and Siegfried exultingly follows its guidance.

Act III. A wild region at the foot of a precipitous cliff. Amid thunder and lightning Wotan summons the all-knowing Erda, to consult her regarding the impending doom of the gods. Can she tell him how to stop a rolling wheel? But here her wisdom ends. Wotan then informs her of his resignation. Since the gods are doomed, he worries no more; it is even his wish. The Volsung Siegfried shall possess the Ring; he shall be the heir of the supreme power in the world; man's rule shall succeed that of the gods. As Erda sinks into her cave, Siegfried arrives, still following the bird which is guiding him to the fire-girded rock on which Wotan had left Brünnhilde, plunged in a magnetic sleep, for disobeying his orders, but mercifully surrounded by flames, so that none but a dauntless hero who fears not the flames nor Wotan's spear shall wake and woo her. Wotan holds

out his spear to impede Siegfried's progress, but, after some irreverent badinage Siegfried cuts it in two, and boldly climbs the rocks amid the leaping flames. Clouds of steam and fire envelop the whole stage amid a magnificent orchestral outburst, and when they finally dissolve and calm down, the scene has changed to the top of the rock where Brünnhilde has lain asleep ever since Siegfried was born. Siegfried unfastens her helmet, carefully cuts the rings of mail on either side of the armor, and then lifts off the cuirass and greaves. Brünnhilde lies before him clad in soft feminine garments. He starts back surprised and dazed — for this is not a man, as he had supposed, but a woman — the first he has ever seen. Now at last trembling and awe seize him. Love has taught him what neither Fafner nor Mime could teach — the emotion of fear. But his passion is stronger than his fear, and he stoops down and with a long and rapturous kiss awakens the demi-goddess from her twenty years' slumber. After the first delight at returning to the light of the sun, and the joy at recognizing in her awakener the hoped-for hero Siegfried, Brünnhilde remembers her divine origin and seeks to repel his passionate advances; but Siegfried soon loses again the newly-found fear; the womanly instincts awaken in Brünnhilde, and she throws herself passionately into his arms.

"The most beautiful of my life's dreams," Wagner called *Siegfried;* and I have already expressed the conviction that he considered it the best of all his dramas. In my opinion it is not only the most symmetrical and perfect of his works, but also the most Wagnerian — that in which all his theories are most consistently and most

astonishingly carried out. In all his other music-dramas and operas there are choruses or ensemble numbers; even *Rheingold* has its vocal trios, and *Tristan* has a short chorus, while in three of its scenes the stage is filled with people. But in *Siegfried* there are at no time more than two persons on the stage, and the only time when two voices unite for a moment is in the love-duo at the end. More curious still, with the exception of the brief episodes of Erda and the Forest Bird, no female voice is heard till the second half of the last act is reached. No wonder that Saint-Saëns exclaimed in regard to this, "the most original part of the Tetralogy": "Not only is this no longer opera, it is no longer the theatre; the spectator is transported to an entirely new world, *which music alone makes possible.*" And so great is the magic of Wagner's genius that few spectators realize that in this score the last traces of the old "opera" are eliminated, until their attention is called to the matter.

The full-fledged Wagnerites do not agree as to which is the master's greatest work. As for myself, I have always hesitated between *Tristan* and *Siegfried*. The question of preference between these two is more a matter of temperament than of art or inspiration. In *Tristan* the passion of love has found its most ecstatic expression since Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet;* while in *Siegfried* we have pictures of forest life, some of which may be placed side by side with the forest scenes and sentiments in *As You Like It*. From a *poetic* point of view *Siegfried* is, beyond all question, Wagner's most finished work. It is simply the most poetic tale in German mythology dramatized and set to music. Almost all the features of the drama are to be found in the old Rhine

legends; but just as no one but Siegfried knew how to weld together the fragments of the sword Nothung, so it remained for Wagner to construct a coherent drama from the poetic material which is scattered through the different Scandinavian and German versions of the Siegfried Saga.

That the average German mind is strangely uncritical, singularly blind to contemporaneous genius, is proved once more by the fact that the literary critics did not rise as a man to proclaim the beauties of this *Siegfried* poem, to announce the birth of a drama, immortal as Goethe's *Faust*, unequalled in all German literature for its exquisite mirroring of forest life. *Rheingold* and *Walküre* are open-air dramas too, but *Siegfried* far surpasses them in buoyancy, spontaneity, and delightful realism which makes us forget every moment that we are in an opera-house. The text of *Siegfried* is in every line so redolent of nature, and poetic beauties are so abundant, that it seems incredible they should not have been recognized at once and loudly celebrated, without a dissentient voice. Shakespeare himself could not have placed before us more vividly this son of a Northern forest, brought up with bears as playmates, ignorant of the world and its human denizens excepting the dwarf Mime; ignorant of the existence of such a being as a woman until brought face to face with Brünnhilde. The brusqueness, the boyish naïveté, the buoyancy, the boastfulness springing from his fearlessness — all the traits natural to such a forest child are embodied in Wagner's Siegfried.

No less naturalistic and individual are the other characters of this drama, in the portrayal of whom Wagner has shown more convincingly than ever the advantages

to be gained by a union of music with poetry for heightening the dramatic effects. Let us briefly consider a few of the more salient points. Mime's hypocritical song, "Als zullendes Kind," in which he recounts his services in Siegfried's behalf, is an amusing tale, and the persistent way in which subsequently Mime introduces snatches of it, in order to avoid answering Siegfried's questions regarding his parentage, produces a ludicrous effect. Siegfried's description of the courtship and love of animals which people his forest home is another pretty conceit, accompanied by the tenderest orchestral strains; and lovelier still are both the music and the poetry when he tells of how he saw his image reflected in the brook. Most pathetic is Mime's tale of Sieglinde's death, intensified by the sorrowful tones and accents of the wood-wind instruments. Magnificent strains, majestic as the Walhalla motive itself, accompany Wotan's song when he enters Mime's cave-like smithy.

The conclusion of the interview with Mime when Wotan, in speaking of the gods in Walhalla, involuntarily touches the ground with his spear, and a faint rumbling of thunder follows, — in the orchestra as well as on the stage, — is one of those sublime effects which Wagner first introduced on the operatic stage. And after Wotan has left Mime to his fears, cowering on the ground and gazing into the forest, where his crazed imagination beholds ghostly flashes and flickers of sunlight, and finally a vision of the hideous Dragon itself, with mouth wide open, — it is here that Wagner's marvellous poetic and onomatopoetic art makes one of its masterworks. The flickering lights as scenically represented, Mime's exclamations, and the flashing,

shrieking, delirious sounds in the orchestra are all one and the same thing; language, scene, and music are here as identical *as if we had but a single sense to apprehend them.*

An exquisite use of the Leading Motive principle is made in the following scene, when Siegfried has returned, and Mime tries to teach him to fear by giving him a gruesome account of the Dragon and his den. Siegfried declares he is very anxious to see the beast and learn the new emotion; but all the while the orchestra does not play the Dragon motive, but the Brünnhilde motive — thus foreshadowing in a most poetic way that not the Dragon, but the sleeping maiden, will first teach him to tremble and stand in awe. Who can fail to see in a case like this what a mighty and subtle power Wagner has added to the dramatist's methods by his use of the Leading Motives, or to smile at the stolidity of critics like Dr. Hanslick, who could not see in Leading Motives anything but labels such as chemists put on their bottles? To note only one more application of the same principle — when Siegfried, after slaying the Dragon, goes into the cave to get the Ring. He is ignorant of its power and uses, but the orchestra knows all about it, and by conjuring some motives from *Rheingold,* tells us about the rape of the gold and its significance. In a word, Wagner has, with his Leading Motives, given the orchestra the faculty of definite articulate *speech.*

The grandest rôle for tenors of the future will be that of Siegfried; and in the smithy and forging songs of the first act of this drama they will celebrate their greatest triumphs. What life, what buoyancy, what melody, what humor, pervade those songs! This whole scene,

indeed, is a marvel of genius, a source of unending delight to every educated spectator. The blowing of the bellows, the filing of the sword, the hissing of the water when it is plunged in red hot, the hammering of it on the anvil, are sights and sounds which are startlingly similar on the stage and in the orchestra. Musical realism can go no further, and when Siegfried raises his sword and with a mighty blow splits the anvil in two his exultant joy is borne across the house on the intoxicating orchestral strains and sways the audience irresistibly to enthusiasm. Note, also, the superb effect produced when, in the consciousness of triumph, Siegfried's song modulates from minor into a jubilant major pæan, before he cleaves the anvil.

The second act of *Siegfried* is unique in stage art. Its gem is the scene where the hero, reclining under a tree, listens to the bird-voices. The whirr and lisping of the violins is an acoustic image of the rustling of the leaves and of the shadows of twigs dancing on the trunks of the trees. How sweetly the bird-voices animate this forest-whirr (*Waldweben*), and what a happy thought it was to leave the bird-voice inarticulate (instrumental) until Siegfried has tasted the Dragon's blood, when at once it becomes articulate (vocal), so that the audience has the same experience in regard to its intelligibility as Siegfried himself! In this wonderful scene Wagner has embodied all his passion for nature with inimitable art, even as in the preceding act, in Siegfried's questions regarding his mother, he gave expression to the sentiment of filial love with an art which no previous musician has approached.

The Dragon scene which interrupts this forest music

came in for much criticism at Bayreuth, partly owing to the fact that the Dragon ordered in England did not arrive in time, and the substitute hastily made *was* rather an unwieldy and ludicrous beast. But as done elsewhere, notably at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, this Dragon is quite a formidable and "life-like" monster. It lashes its tail furiously, hisses angry steam from its nostrils, moves from side to side as nimbly as a big lizard, and when it dies, covers its eyes with its lids quite pathetically.

Some of Wagner's opponents have imagined that they scored a great point against him by remarking that many persons in the audience laugh when the Dragon first appears. But why on earth should they not laugh? *Siegfried* is a fairy tale, and Wagner expects his adult hearers to take it in the way adults generally take a fairy tale — in a humorous or semi-humorous way. Even children do not believe you are a bear when you "play bear" with them; they are half frightened, half amused when you pursue them on all fours; and for grown children it is not necessary to take the Dragon seriously in order to be delighted with the scene. Wagner himself treats the scene humorously in the banter between Siegfried and the Dragon before the fight. But when the fight really begins, the audience is as downright in earnest as at a bull-fight, and the extraordinary hubbub in the orchestra makes it impossible for any one not to be excited over the contest. No doubt there is some force in the criticism that Wagner is no true realist because he makes a dragon sing. At first sight this seems a serious objection — yet, come to think of it, I do not remember to have ever met a dragon who did *not* sing.

Seriously speaking, no scene ever written has given the musical experts more opportunity to show their habitual lack of poetic feeling, of naïveté, and sense of humor, than this. "*Young Siegfried* has the decided advantage that it presents the important myth in the form of a play to the public, just as a fairy tale is presented to a child." Thus wrote Wagner to Uhlig, in 1851, and thus it is that the public looks on *Siegfried* to-day. But what did the "experts" in 1876 say of it? Here are a few specimens. Joseph Bennett calls it —

"a combat of man and brute such as no stage art can make other but absurd." Paul Lindau exclaims that "it seems incredible that an artist of Wagner's rank should degrade himself by writing music for a show which belongs in a fair-ground. Away with the worm! The fight with the Dragon on the stage is childish and objectionable." And Dr. Hanslick remarks that "Wagner composed this scene in perfect seriousness, but its effect, especially at the close, when the Dragon becomes sentimental and makes confidential communications to his murderer, is extremely comic."

Comment on these opinions would be foolish. A man who cannot see the exquisite combinations of humor and pathos in this fairy scene for grown children, cannot be helped by argument, however much we may pity him. Compare with these philistinisms the words of another musical expert, who is at the same time a man of feeling — Anton Seidl: —

"Every time that the Dragon scene is enacted on the stage (New York) I see, in different parts of the house, a smile of contempt, or an expression of surprise at the childishness of the idea of making a dragon sing. These people I should like to take to Munich, where Fafner is sung by the veteran Kindermann. Seldom have I heard anything more pathetic on the stage than the dying words of this dragon. Not I alone, who might be accused of

partiality, but the whole audience was so overwhelmed by pity and sympathy that I saw tears rolling down many cheeks. The death of Fafner, the last of his tribe, I never heard more pathetically enacted than by this artist."

As for the comic side of the encounter with the Dragon before the fight, what could be more droll than Siegfried's banter and bragging bluster, and the Dragon's calm and contemptuous rejoinder: —

> "To drink I came,
> now fodder I find"?

which is sung with such gusto that we can easily fancy the hero already struggling in the Dragon's jaws. Incredible as it may seem, Dr. Hanslick quotes a great part of this inimitable scene by way of showing what a bungler the poet Wagner is, and how he maltreats the German language! As a matter of fact, there is not, in all German literature, a scene in which the language used is more realistically and amusingly adapted to the situation than here.

One of the most amusing touches in this act, which is full of the spirit of comedy, is Mime's parting words as he leaves Siegfried under the tree, waiting for the Dragon: —

> "Fafner and Siegfried —
> Siegfried and Fafner —
> Would that each slaughtered the other."

But the most ingenious bit of humor occurs in the lines where Mime sings his murderous thoughts to Siegfried in the sweetest of accents, while Siegfried, thanks to having tasted the Dragon's blood, hears his *real* sentiments instead of his *intended* words, with this climax:

"Why, my darling child, you do not understand me! I merely wish to chop off your head!" It is in scenes like this, where the music can give one sentiment while the words express another, that the superiority of the music-drama to the literary drama is incontestably shown.

Wagner is very partial to the introductions to his third acts. *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, *Tristan*, *Meistersinger*, and *Parsifal* have such introductions, which may be considered the orchestral gems of these works. *Siegfried*, too, has a wonderfully constructed tone-poem to lead into the stormy and weird opening scene of the third act. One feels that this exuberance, this exultation, can hardly be purely artistic — that it must have a biographic significance: and so it has; for remember this act was composed after King Ludwig had invited Wagner to resume the long-neglected Trilogy. The joy over this happy turn in his affairs seems to have infected the third act of *Siegfried*, to which he now turned after this long interruption. It is the greatest, the most inspired, of the three acts. Although the opening scene between Wotan and Erda, with its weird harmonies and mysterious tone-colors, is perhaps for musical epicures only, the following scene, where Siegfried ascends the mountain amid the flames, while the orchestra flickers and flames, and roars, carries away even the most unsusceptible portion of the audience; and the scene which follows, when the hero has awakened the Valkyrie with his "long, long kiss of youth and love," is merely a translation of these magic flames to the hearts of the lovers, where they rage and burn on.

The passionate love-duo which closes the act would be magnificent in any place; but coming as it does, it affords

a remarkable instance of Wagner's dramatic ingenuity. Throughout the first two acts and part of the third, for more than three hours and a half the spectator has heard no female voice, with the exception of the few notes sung by the Forest Bird and Erda. Siegfried, when he finds Brünnhilde, had never seen a woman; the audience, when she begins to sing, feel as if they had never heard a woman's voice. The effect is thrilling, and one understands why in ascetic times women were not allowed to sing in church: for the very timbre of woman's voice suggests love.

DIE GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG

After the *Siegfried* forest-drama, in which the tragic elements are happily relieved by comic incidents, and which Dr. Hueffer, in comparing the Tetralogy to a symphony, aptly characterized as the Scherzo, we come to the tragic gloom and sublimity of the final drama, the *Dusk of the Gods*. It is twice as long as *Rheingold*, including as it does a prelude consisting of two long scenes, besides the usual three acts. Dramatically, as well as musically, *Die Götterdämmerung* contains material enough for half-a-dozen operas in the old style. The story is a continuation of Siegfried's adventures. When that hero had slain Fafner, he left all the golden Nibelung treasures in the Dragon's cave, taking with him only the Tarnhelmet and the Ring, hardly conscious of their value, although the bird had told him that the Ring ensured supreme power in the world to its possessor. At the close of *Siegfried* we saw Brünnhilde throwing herself passionately into the arms of the fearless hero who had crossed the flames to woo and wed her.

Prelude. As the curtain rises on the last drama of the Tetralogy, we see once more Brünnhilde's rock, with a rim of fire in the background, too faint to dispel the twilight gloom in which we behold indistinctly the three Norns, or Fates, in dark garments, fastening their golden cord in turn to a tree or rock and unravelling the past, present, and future from its fibres. They tell of Siegfried's bold act in shattering Wotan's spear, and how Wotan, thereafter, had the world-ash, from which the spear had been made, cut into pieces which were piled around Walhalla, in which he and the other gods were awaiting their end. As they are about to pry into the future, the cord snaps apart, and the Norns disappear.

The rising sun has almost obliterated the encircling flames, when Siegfried and Brünnhilde appear on the scene. They have enjoyed a happy period of wedded life, and the former Valkyrie has imparted to Siegfried much of her divine knowledge, besides making him invulnerable — except in the back, for she knows that her hero will never show his back to an enemy. After the custom of mediæval heroes it is now time for Siegfried to go in quest of new adventures. He gives her his Ring as pledge of his fidelity, and she gives him her shield and her steed Grane, no longer able to speed through the air, but still a horse such as mortal never rode before.

Act I. In the open hall of the Gibichungs' burg, with a view of the Rhine in the background, Gunther, Gutrune, and Hagen are sitting at a table. Neither King Gunther nor his beautiful sister, Gutrune, is married, and Hagen is anxious that they should be. Hagen is a wild, gloomy warrior, the King's half-brother, the offspring of Gunther's mother and the dwarf Alberich, who

had succeeded in gaining with gold the love which his curse had made inaccessible to him otherwise. Just as Wotan has reared Siegmund to be the means of getting back the Ring, so Alberich had begotten Hagen as his agent. Hagen knows what is wanted of him, and he has a wily plan for securing the Ring. Knowing that Siegfried possesses it, the first step necessary is to have that hero near him. He begins by reproaching the King for not being married, and tells him of a beauteous woman who should be his queen — the Valkyrie, Brünnhilde. Hagen does not know that Brünnhilde has already been wooed and won, but he knows that no one but Siegfried can penetrate the flames surrounding her. He therefore proposes that they should find Siegfried, and offer him the hand of the beautiful Gutrune if he should consent to win Brünnhilde as bride for Gunther. The objection that Siegfried might already be in love is brushed aside by Hagen, who knows how to brew a drink which will cause the hero to forget all other women, and fall in love with Gutrune. Hardly has this scheme been elaborated, when a merry horn is heard, and presently Siegfried is seen coming opportunely down the Rhine. He is welcomed, the potion is administered and has the desired effect. He forgets his wife, asks for Gutrune's hand, and she is promised to him after he shall have delivered Brünnhilde into the King's hands. Without delay he sets out with Gunther on the journey, after swearing blood-brotherhood with him.

In the meantime, we are brought back to Brünnhilde, who sits on her rock fondly contemplating her beloved Ring. She is roused from her reverie by a sudden storm, in the midst of which appears Waltraute, one of her

sister-Valkyries. In mournful tones she tells of the sad state of affairs at Walhalla, with Wotan and the other gods awaiting their doom in gloomy silence. Once only had Wotan spoken, to say that were Brünnhilde to return the Ring to the Rhine-maidens, "the curse's weight would be taken from god and the world." Upon hearing which Waltraute had hastened to Brünnhilde to entreat her to give up the Ring. But in vain. The Ring is the pledge of Siegfried's faith, the symbol of his love, and what is all the world, what is the eternal happiness and fate of all the gods, to Siegfried's love? In despair, presaging woe to her and to Walhalla's hosts, Waltraute mounts her horse and hastes away through the air. No sooner has she left than Brünnhilde hears a horn — Siegfried's horn. She jumps up, and through the columns of fire comes a man. It is Siegfried, but transformed into the shape of Gunther by means of the Tarnhelmet, whose secret Hagen had revealed. At sight of the form of a stranger Brünnhilde starts back in horror; but Siegfried pursues her, and after a short struggle takes away her Ring. After this she is powerless, and obliged to follow him obediently to her abode. Before entering, Siegfried draws his sword, which, he says, shall rest between him and Gunther's bride, to prove that faithfully he wooed for his friend.

Act II. Hagen, spear in hand, shield by his side, is sitting in front of the King's castle. He is asleep, and the bright rays of the moon, suddenly falling on him, show the figure of Alberich, who is kneeling before his son, and, as in a trance or dream, urges him to persist in his plot to get the Ring; with it, they two will be rulers of the world, but if the Rhine-maidens should

get possession of it again, it will be lost forever. Hagen promises, and Alberich vanishes. Slowly the sun rises and shows first its red rays and gradually full daylight on the waters of the Rhine. Suddenly Siegfried appears from behind a bush, and takes off the Tarnhelmet, the use of which had enabled him to transport himself instantaneously back to the King's palace, while Gunther himself follows more slowly by water with his unwilling bride, Brünnhilde. Hagen ascends a cliff, and his loud heigho! heigho! his cries of danger, and call to arms soon bring his warriors around him, eager to know the source of trouble; but when they hear that the fancied danger is the King's impending marriage, and that they are expected to prepare for a great feast, great hilarity ensues, since even grim Hagen is so facetiously disposed. The King presently arrives with his bride, and is greeted by a chorus of welcome and congratulation. Brünnhilde's astonishment on seeing Siegfried changes to indignation when she finds that he claims Gutrune as his bride, and her anger reaches a climax of fury when she sees her Ring on his finger. She indignantly accuses him of deceit, and claims that she is his real wife. Siegfried, ignorantly guilty, swears on the point of Hagen's spear that he is innocent, that his sword rested between him and Brünnhilde that night; but she angrily pushes him aside and swears that he is guilty of perjury. Siegfried, with a sneer at this mysterious exhibition of feminine temper, ends the scene by putting his arm around Gutrune, and entering the hall, leaving Hagen, the King, and his bride alone. They resolve that the traitor must die, and Brünnhilde informs Hagen that the hero's body is vulnerable in the back. To save

Gutrune's feelings it is decided that Siegfried shall fall in the woods, on a hunting expedition, so that his death may be attributed to a wild boar.

Act III. takes us to a wild forest region by the shore of the Rhine. The three Rhine-maidens emerge from the water, lamenting the loss of their gold, and imploring the sun to send that way the hero who wears the ring made of that gold. Their prayer is heard. Siegfried, pursuing a bear, gets separated from his companions, and suddenly comes across the Rhine-daughters. They beg him for the Ring on his finger, telling of the curse attached to it, and prophesying his death that very day if he keeps it; but he looks on all their coaxing and warning as a way women have to get what they want, and refuses to part with the Ring. The maidens dive and vanish as the horns of Siegfried's companions are heard. Gunther, Hagen, and the hunters now appear on the scene, with the game on their shoulders. They all lie down in groups and pass around the cup. Hagen addresses Siegfried, saying he has heard that he understands the language of birds. Thus invited, Siegfried tells the story of Mime, the Dragon, and the forest-bird. When he has got to the place where he followed the bird to Brünnhilde's sleeping-place, Hagen gives him a drink with which he has secretly mixed the juice of an herb. This potion restores his remembrance of Brünnhilde, and he proceeds to relate how he wooed, won, and wedded her. As Gunther listens, horrified, to this revelation, two ravens fly across the stage. Siegfried turns to look at them, and Hagen stabs him in the back, to the consternation of all. Siegfried makes a last effort to crush Hagen with his shield, then falls down and expires with

a greeting to Brünnhilde. The body is placed on his shield and slowly carried up the hill in the moonlight, to the sound of the majestic dead-march, the procession gradually disappearing in the gathering mists.

Meanwhile, at the castle, Gutrune awaits Siegfried's return. Hagen comes and tells her he has been killed by a boar. The corpse arrives, and Gutrune throws herself on it in despair. Hagen claims the Ring, and when Gunther opposes him he kills him with a stab. Hagen then attempts to snatch the Ring from Siegfried's finger, when the corpse raises its hand in awful warning. At this moment Brünnhilde appears, solemnly, majestically. Gutrune accuses her of being the cause of all this, when Brünnhilde scornfully informs her that she has never been anything but Siegfried's mistress, as she herself was his lawful wife. She directs the young men to build a funeral pyre and place on it the body of Siegfried, after she has taken the Ring from his finger. Then she throws a torch under the pyre, and, as the flames rise on high, seizes her horse and rushes into the burning mass. Suddenly the fire collapses, the Rhine begins to swell until it has reached the coals of the pyre, bearing on its surface the three Rhine-daughters, one of whom recovers the Ring from the ashes. On seeing this, Hagen jumps into the water, with the cry, "Back from the Ring," but is pulled down and drowned. The sky is seen aglow: Walhalla is in flames. The end of the gods is at hand.

The story of *Die Götterdämmerung* is related in the preceding pages as it is unfolded in the poem and as it was enacted at Bayreuth. Unfortunately, the example

of Bayreuth has seldom been followed in other cities; and for this Wagner himself is to blame. There can be no doubt that, for practical purposes, *Die Götterdämmerung* is too long. At Bayreuth, where the Wagner dramas are every one's business as well as pleasure, and where performances begin at four and have an hour's intermission after each act, four to five hours of music is perhaps not too much; but under ordinary circumstances, where the opera is looked upon as recreation after the day's business, three hours is quite enough. Wagner followed Meyerbeer's bad example in this respect, at any rate, that he made most of his works extend to four hours and more. The consequence is that cuts and mutilations can hardly be avoided. In the last drama of the Tetralogy, three scenes are habitually sacrificed, two of which are unique mood pictures. Nothing could be finer in its way than the sombre opening scene of the Norns — a "symphony in gray" to the eyes as to the ears; yet this is frequently omitted, as is that companion piece of gloom and weirdness, Alberich's interview with Hagen ("Schläf'st du, Hagen, mein Sohn?") which at Bayreuth made the cold chills creep down one's back. Not less important, musically, is the third scene, now often omitted — Waltraute's visit to Brünnhilde; poetically, too, this is one of the best. Has ever poet or playwright, in hyperbolic language or dramatic situation, more strikingly revealed the essence, the superlative importance of the master passion, as is done here in Brünnhilde's refusal to part with the Ring, the pledge of Siegfried's love, even though she could thereby redeem the world from its curse, and save the gods from their impending doom?

"A glance at its glittering gold,
a flash of its circling fire —
blinds my senses
to all your gods'
ever-lasting fate!
For always in it
speaks to me Siegfried's love."

If the parts usually omitted have such charm, what must be said of those that remain, those that no Kapellmeister could be so callous as to cut? To mention them all would be to go over the whole tragedy again. A few may be recalled here. If I were asked what is the most thrilling scene ever composed, I should hesitate between the climax of the *Tristan* love-duo and the love-duo in the second prelude to the *Götterdämmerung*, where Siegfried takes leave of Brünnhilde, and she gazes rapturously after him until his horn dies away in the distance. There is no sadness in this parting; the love-intoxication is too complete, too joyous, too confident, to allow any other feeling to be mingled with it, even at the moment of parting: and to this amorous rapture the two voices, and afterwards the orchestra alone, give expression with a vividness which makes mere human speech, in the greatest of tragedies, spoken by the greatest of tragedians, seem impotent and dumb in comparison. It is the amorous apotheosis of pantomimic music, following a sublime love-duo; it is the vindication of the claims of the music-drama to be considered the first of all human arts.

Of action, in the usual theatric sense of the word, there is more in the *Götterdämmerung* than in any other of its author's dramas except — for its length — in *Rheingold*.

Incident crowds on incident. If in *Siegfried* the reader often stops to admire the exquisite poetry of nature, in the last drama of the Tetralogy he is hurried along in breathless excitement by the absorbing interest of the action. With the music the fascination is more than doubled.

"*The music triples the intensity of the feelings with which the characters are animated* — that is all one can say to those who have not heard it," wrote Saint-Saëns at Bayreuth. "The auditor," he adds, "loses all sense of time as by a magic effect, and forgets to count the hours." "It is impossible to give the faintest idea of such music; it resembles no other."

Much has been written about the thrilling murder scene, and the grandeur of the Dead March, in which the story of Siegfried's life is retold just as the scenes of his life are said to recur to a drowning man, or as a minister eulogizes a fallen hero over the grave by recounting his deeds. It was one of those subtle strokes of genius which seem as inevitable as laws of nature that this funereal conclusion to Siegfried's life should follow immediately upon his recital of his early life — that glorious narrative in which we once more hear all the enchanting motives of the *Siegfried* drama. This whole scene is one before which even the frivolous box-holders of our modern opera-houses are awed, and for which they are willing to postpone their supper. Perhaps I may be permitted to quote what I wrote after a performance of the *Götterdämmerung* at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York: —

"But last evening, when Wagner's elaborate tragedy was given, all the boxes remained occupied until after Siegfried's body had been carried up the hill amid the lowering clouds; and there was

a solemn silence throughout the house as if it had been a real funeral of a great general or man of genius. This scene is one before which the most inveterate enemy of Wagner and the most unmusical mind must bow in awe, and confess that there is nothing to match it in the whole range of dramatic composition, with or without music. It is a scene which has perhaps made more converts to Wagner than anything else he wrote, and which at the twentieth hearing, as at the first, touches the heart as profoundly and pathetically as any tragedy in real life in which we are personally concerned. Go, ye scoffers, hear this drama, and hang your heads in shame at the thought that you ever spoke a word in disparagement of a genius who could create such a sublime scene."

In a preceding chapter the question was put, Which is the greatest of Wagner's works? and the answer was, Either *Tristan* or *Siegfried*, the first named being musically the more epoch-making, while *Siegfried* is the more symmetrical and perfect as a work of art. But were I asked, Which is the greatest *act* ever composed by Wagner? I should answer, The third act of *Götterdämmerung*. For this act contains not only the wonderful autobiographic and death-scenes just described, but it has two others which have no equal in the whole range of music. Even Weber in his *Oberon* has nothing so enchanting as the trio of the Rhine-maidens mingling their sweet, plaintive, or warning tones with the weird harmonies of the orchestra. Wagner, in his later works, seldom writes concerted pieces, but when he does, how he distances all competitors! And what a mighty ocean of sound the final scene is, when Brünnhilde gives majestic utterance to her grief, announces the impending conflagration of Walhalla, and greets her lover, whom she is about to join on the funeral pyre. Here, all the pertinent leading motives of the whole Tetralogy are once more recalled and

combined, with an astounding art of construction at which Bach himself would have opened wide his eyes in wonder, and with an overwhelming emotional effect at which he would have bowed his head in awe and admiration. It is an ocean of sound to which each of the dramas contributes its rivers and rivulets. How exultingly Loge's fire-motive seizes upon the burg of the gods! Once more Siegfried's motive is heard, but the sounds which have presaged the end of the gods smother it. But neither Loge nor this gloomy Götterdämmerung motive have the last word. The new melody, symbolizing the redemption through love, rises on the violins, upheld by the harps, proclaiming that the curse of Alberich's Ring has been expiated.

Not the least remarkable thing in the *Götterdämmerung* is the delightful freshness and spontaneity of the music. It might be stated as a general rule that great composers have written their most inspired works in the later years of their life. Should any one, however, doubt this, he might still find an explanation for the spontaneity of this drama in the fact that some of its melodies sprouted in Wagner's mind immediately after *Lohengrin* was completed, for it was at that time that the poem of *Siegfried's Tod* (the original version of *Götterdämmerung*) was written; and it was Wagner's way, as we have seen, to conceive his principal musical themes at the time when the poem was written. Tappert (77) tells us, from Wagner's own testimony, that this was true of some of the music in this case; and in a letter to Liszt, written in the month of the first performance of *Lohengrin* (August, 1850), when he still intended to set the original *Siegfried's Tod* to music, he exclaimed that the *Siegfried* (*i.e. Götter-*

dämmerung) music was already haunting him in all his organs (*spukt mir bereits in allen Gliedern*).[1]

Regarding the sources of Wagner's Nibelung poems so much has been written elsewhere that it suffices here to recall the fact that less use was made of the mediæval *Nibelungenlied* than of the still older Edda Myths, which Wagner sifted and welded into his *Ring*.[2]

NIBELUNG CRITICS AND PROPHETS

Some time after the first Nibelung rehearsals Liszt wrote to a friend: "Of the wonderwork, *The Nibelung's Ring*, I have lately heard more than twenty rehearsals at Bayreuth. It overtops and commands our whole art-epoch as Mont Blanc does our other mountains." A similar thought occurred to Saint-Saëns, who wrote that "from the elevation of the last act of *Götterdämmerung* the whole work appears, in its almost supernatural grandeur, like the chain of the Alps seen from the summit of Mont Blanc."

This, however, was but the silly enthusiasm of two men of genius. The academic "experts" knew better. Professor Lombroso, in *The Man of Genius*, remarks that —

"it is sufficient to be present at any academy, university, faculty, or gathering of men who, without genius, possess at least erudi-

[1] Poor Hanslick, ignorant of these facts, once more gave proof of his critical acumen by pointing out that in the other Nibelung dramas there "coursed a quicker, warmer blood, indicating an earlier origin, whereas on the *Götterdämmerung* there lies a peculiarly oppressive fatigue and exhaustion, something like the approaching weariness of old age. Here nothing seems to sprout and bloom."

[2] For details on this point the reader may profitably consult the works of Tappert and Muncker. Systematic analyses of the Leading Motives of the Tetralogy have been supplied by Wolzogen and Kobbé.

tion, to perceive at once that their dominant thought is always disdain and hate of the man who possesses, almost or entirely, the quality of genius."

The "disdain and hate of genius" displayed by the critical erudites at Bayreuth were an amazing sight to behold. The onslaughts on *Tristan* and the *Meistersinger* in previous years seemed mere preliminary skirmishes to the cannonade of hostile articles and pamphlets that commenced at Bayreuth and continued for years. Many chapters might be filled with curiosities of *Nibelung* criticism; here there is room for only a few of the most amusing specimens.

Let us begin with the English Archphilistine, Bennett, in whose *Letters from Bayreuth* we are told among other funny things that

> "we have in *Rheingold* the continuous flow of formless music" which "streams along the mind, so to speak, without passing into it," and "offers but little of an intelligible character to lay hold of." This music "has no meaning by itself." The dialogues in *Die Walküre* are "most terribly wearisome and painful sounds," which excite the mind "to a state of intense irritation." Nevertheless, there are things in this music-drama which "approach as nearly as possible to that which we commonly know as music." Of the music in the *Götterdämmerung* the memory "retains an impression definite only with regard to features which produced weariness." As a music-drama, this work "disappoints, the more keenly because of the magnificent opportunities supplied by its situations for really sublime musical effect."[1]

Another English expert, Mr. H. H. Statham, wrote, in 1876, an article on Wagner for the *Edinburgh Re-*

[1] For a caustic and amusing rejoinder to Mr. Bennett's suggestion of how much better Verdi would have done with this drama, see Henderson's *Preludes and Studies*, where Sir Arthur Sullivan also is "sized up" as a Wagner critic.

view, which he reprinted in 1892 in a book entitled *My Thoughts on Music and Musicians*. One of these "thoughts" is that

"of all the doggerel ever written 'to be said or sung' on the stage, Wagner's verses appear to be among the worst. Childish jingle and alliteration take the place of poetic thought. . . . He has certainly prostituted the language of Schiller and Goethe. But it would be cruel to judge such trash by any known literary standard." Another of Mr. Statham's "thoughts" is that Wagner was "the most remarkable charlatan who has ever appeared in art," the characteristics of charlatanism being "brag and insincerity." Still another "thought": The music of his operas "is entirely devoid of continuity of musical form." And a few more: The Leading Motives have nothing "in common with true melodic invention and expression"; they are "arbitrary groups of notes destitute of melodic expression or coherence." The *Götterdämmerung* leaves a sense that "one ought to be ashamed of being seen listening for hours to ugly music accompanying an absurd and puerile stage play."

Mr. Statham is not only "thoughtful"; he also has a delicious sense of humor, for he suggests that, on account of the presence of the horse Grane, the subtitle of the *Nibelung's Ring* should be "*Scenes in the Life of a Cab-Horse.*" Mr. Statham doubtless knew that nothing kills so surely as ridicule.

Turning now to the best-known German critics, we find in the pages of Gustav Engel such gems as the admission that the song of the Rhine-maidens in *Rheingold* is "to a certain degree even melodious"! "Of *Siegfried* a knowledge of the text and score had led one to expect little." He mercifully admits that it is Wagner's misfortune more than his fault that he had to resort to something more artificial and difficult than the simple subject and forms of *Don Juan!*

Ludwig Speidel of Vienna found that

"in the *Walküre* the only tragic thing was a tenor without a voice." "In *Siegfried* there are moments which make a near approach to real music; one more step, and the art would be reached; Wagner, who never brings forth a musical idea from the depth of his soul, is an ingenious imitator of external events; his music in the forest-scene is the cleverest ape of reality." As a whole, *Siegfried* is a "puppet-play." Of the *Nibelung* poem in general, Speidel says: "Consider the bungling structure as a whole, the vile spirit which pervades it, the weakness (*Verblasenheit*) of the characters, — and ask yourself whether an artificial, blundering work like this can be dignified by the name of 'poem.'"

It is to the critic of the *Neue Freie Presse*, however, that we must go for the most sparkling *Nibelung* epigrams. Here, as always, Dr. Hanslick is *facile princeps*. He tells us that the choice of Bayreuth was a mistake, the invisible orchestra an exaggeration. He found the *Rheingold* poem the most "insipid" thing he had ever come across. On reading this poem for the first time one becomes "seasick, tossed about between vexation and laughter." Of the Tetralogy as a whole he says: —

"Wagner's latest reform is not an enrichment, a development or innovation within music, in the sense in which this can be said of the art of Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, Schumann; it is, on the contrary, a perversion and violation of the fundamental laws of music, a style opposed to the nature of human hearing and sentiment." "The knife has here been applied not to antiquated forms, but to the living root of dramatic music."

"What torture it is to follow this musical goose-march four evenings, he only knows who has experienced it." In the first act of the *Walküre* the redeeming feature is the love-tune. The second act is "an abyss of ennui," with only one beautiful melody, which is stolen from Marschner. Siegfried's forging song does not amount to much. "It sounds more like a funeral dirge than a song of

joy. Naïve, natural merriment is beyond Wagner's ken." Siegfried's Death March is not a product of inspiration, but of "ingenious reflection."

Hanslick cordially agrees with Ehlert and Lindau that the Bayreuth event had "no national significance"; and with Naumann that it is ridiculous to speak of Wagner as a martyr, a man "who was misunderstood or maltreated by his contemporaries." Even the scenic wonders and innovations introduced in the *Nibelung's Ring* are an evil "which will bring about the ruin of the whole genus opera." Thus it goes on merrily, page after page.

The comedy grows still funnier when we pass on to the utterances of Louis Ehlert, whom Hanslick once more cites as "an eloquent and intelligent champion of Wagner." We saw in the chapter on *Tristan* what sort of a "champion" Ehlert was; here are a few of his "eloquent" pleadings in behalf of the *Nibelung's Ring.* He accuses Wagner of being guilty of

"dramatic velleities which we would find unpardonable even in Birch-Pfeiffer." Wotan is always "tiresome," Mime "repulsive" without being at all comic. Indeed, "Wagner seems to be utterly unable to distinguish between the comic and the tiresome." In the *Götterdämmerung* drama "the whole axis is misplaced"; Brünnhilde alone has our sympathy, and "love is degraded to a delirium." Wagnerism will last "until a *spontaneous* operatic poet will put an end to this protean combination of arts." And six years later (1882) Ehlert wrote of the Nibelung dramas that "they have made their journey through the world and have not stood the test. . . . A pity for all the power which Wagner wasted on the greatest of his works, and it is to be sincerely hoped that he may never discover how impossible it is for us to still enjoy anything but fragments of it."

Extraordinary "championship," *n'est ce pas?* But

there is something even more remarkable about the Nibelung criticisms than such arrogant academic stolidity, with its ludicrous assumption of infallibility. Paul Lindau's *Sober Letters* from Bayreuth present a still more deplorable spectacle. Lindau did not pose as a musical expert, but he is one of the best-known German critics, playwrights, and novelists of his period. That such a man, on hearing so sublime a tragedy as the *Götterdämmerung* for the first time, should have been willing to degrade himself to the rôle of a clown by cracking a number of silly jokes over it (for instance, after every scene, he brings in the "comic" refrain, "unfortunately it is too long"); and that the German public should have relished this clownish treatment so much as to buy a dozen editions of Lindau's pamphlet, — these are facts which interest students of civilization as well as musical historians. Yet, after all, since the circus draws a thousand where a tragedy draws a hundred, why should not circus criticism be more popular than art criticism?

Another curious — physiological — phenomenon calls for mention. Lindau was "mortally fatigued" by the Bayreuth performances. On Ehlert the effect of *Rheingold* was "complete collapse, nerve-death." On Hanslick the effect, after a short time, was always "torture." Jules Janin says that Wagner's later dramas "produce an intellectual tension bordering on suffering and bring about something like *an obliteration of the mental faculties.*" Was that the case with Hanslick, Ehlert, Lindau, etc.? If so, we have a natural explanation of the character of their criticisms. I, for my part, did not find the Bayreuth performances in the least fatiguing. I would have been more than willing to hear not only

Rheingold, but the doubly-long *Götterdämmerung*, twice in one day; and I know of others who were like me. But of course people differ in their powers of mental endurance, and it would be cruel to chide the weak-minded for what is rather their misfortune than their fault. There was a time when a half-hour symphony was considered too great a strain on the hearers' minds, wherefore vocal solos were interspersed between the movements.

It is in their rôle of Prophets, however, that the Bayreuth critics cut the funniest capers. Lindau prophesied that the fate of the *Nibelung's Ring* would be this, that some day a merry editor would come along and cut down the four dramas so unmercifully that only one would be left, which would resemble the old-fashioned operas as one egg resembles another. "The Bayreuth undertaking is doomed," wrote Albert Wolff; "to-morrow this Bayreuth theatre will probably be a circus, or a dance-hall, or a national shooting-gallery." Otto Gumprecht expressed his belief that the *Götterdämmerung* was "the only part of the Trilogy which the German theatres would desire to acquire." The sceptical Hanslick points out with the emphasis of italics that the Bayreuth success proves nothing about the value and vitality of the *Nibelung's Ring*.

"*For that it is necessary that Bayreuth should now travel to Europe* after Europe has been at Bayreuth. *Once* the mountain came to the prophet; now the prophet will leave to go to the mountain."

With the same disbelief in the future of Wagner's Bayreuth work and the same amusing pompousness of critical vanity, Ehlert exclaims:—

"Is it conceivable that such an accumulation of means should be repeated, or — more improbable still — even become a yearly custom?"

Time has made sad havoc with these prophecies. The *Nibelung's Ring*, which the critics declared to be impossible outside of Bayreuth, and not likely to be repeated even there, has travelled all over Europe, and won tremendous triumphs even in America. During the first fifteen years following the Festival of 1876 the four *Ring* dramas were given 358+823+322+314=1817 times in German cities, and to-day there is hardly even a second or third class city which does not have its annual performances of the *Ring;* nor is any one now afraid of it on account of its being "interminable — like all rings," as von Miris puts it in the *Fliegende Blätter:* —

"Und dass man das Festspiel
An Nibelungenring nennt,
Das passt ganz vortrefflich,
Denn a' Ring hat koan End."

And as regards the "mountain going" more than *once* to the prophet — in 1879 Hanslick chuckled gleefully, in reviewing the Bayreuth literature, because "the future of the Bayreuth Festivals appears very doubtful to *all* our authorities." "It must be very depressing to the Wagnerites," he adds, that "three years have now elapsed without a repetition of the Festival having been risked." Very depressing indeed; it made Wagner very unhappy; and was not that cause for national German congratulation? But the world moved. In 1882 came the *Parsifal* Festival at Bayreuth. Other festivals followed in 1883, 1884, 1886, 1888, 1889, 1891, 1892, —

with ever-increasing success, until, in 1891, the seats for all the twenty performances were sold out several weeks in advance, and sums of twenty dollars and more were eagerly paid for five-dollar tickets; while the receipts must have been $150,000. "Very depressing to the Wagnerites."

THE PARSIFAL PERIOD

FINANCIAL RESULT OF THE NIBELUNG FESTIVAL

WAS Wagner satisfied with the general result of the first Festival? Yes and no. "My ideal was not attained," he said to his friends in a speech delivered at Bayreuth a year after the Festival; yet, as he wrote on the margin of a photograph which he gave to one of the prime-movers of the Festival:

"O Freund Heckel
Es war doch gut!"

He could bask in the consciousness of having succeeded in a mammoth enterprise, the realization of which even so dauntless a general as Emperor William had considered improbable. He had had his own theatre, all the details of which were in accord with his designs, and in which his art-ideal was more clearly presented than it could have been in any theatre in the world. He had been absolute monarch of all he surveyed, with no stubborn and ignorant conductor or singers to harass him as in Paris when *Tannhäuser* was given and elsewhere. The singers and players had been of his own choosing, and the achievements of Materna, Niemann, Vogl, Hill, Siehr, Betz, Lehmann, and Schlosser had been among the most memorable in the history of dramatic song. On the

other hand, we who have since heard Alvary or Vogl know how far from an ideal vocalist and hero the Bayreuth Siegfried was; and the scenic arrangements, thanks to the insufficiency of funds, were not perfect in all details. Wagner affected to despise the press, but he was sensitive to criticism, and the shameful abuse of his great work in the leading organs of public opinion must have cost him many a moment of anguish and indignation, and deepened his pessimism.

But the chief ground for disappointment was the financial result of the Festival — a large deficit, for which, as Heckel truly remarks, the press was primarily responsible, since it had for years done everything in its power to prevent the Germans from participating in the Festival, by decrying it in advance as a fraud and a humbug. The amount of this deficit was about $37,500, and Wagner now had leisure to reflect on the fact that, as he had realized a few months before the Festival, it was a reckless deed to proceed with it when of the 1300 subscription tickets needed to cover all expenses, less than one-half had been taken. A few weeks after the Festival he made a trip to Italy, to recover from the exhaustion brought on him by months of incessant work and worry. For the first time he extended his journey as far south as Rome and Naples. But even here the burden of that deficit weighed on his mind. In November he sent a circular to the patrons of the Festival, asking for assistance. He supposed that these patrons had made his cause their own and would look upon themselves as guarantors. But he found that there had been "in reality no patrons at all, but only spectators on very expensive seats." A wealthy aristocrat in Silesia proved

an exception, and "Herr Plüddemann's aunt in Koblenz sent twenty-five dollars"; thus the burden of the deficit rested on Wagner's own head. He had composed and brought before his contemporaries an immortal work of art; now he was called upon to pay for it too, after having been scolded by the press for not having thanked these contemporaries for going to hear it.

Various plans for covering the deficit, and promoting the Bayreuth cause, came under his consideration on his return to Bayreuth in December. He offered the Bayreuth Theatre to the Munich authorities as a *filiale* or branch of their opera-house, which offer was refused. He applied once more to Parliament. Inasmuch as the government paid large sums every year to conservatories which did nothing for national art, why should not a real dramatic school like the Bayreuth Theatre receive support? The sum of $25,000 a year would be sufficient. But the government officials had no ears for such a scheme: "an influential member of Parliament assured me that neither he nor any of his colleagues had the remotest conception of what I wanted" (referring to a project for a dramatic high school, to which I shall return presently).

THE LONDON FESTIVAL

In the meantime, he had been obliged to borrow $8000, at five per cent interest, in order to cover the most urgent part of the deficit. A project to give a series of concerts in London, originated by Wilhelmj, did not at first appeal to him. He had already commenced the *Parsifal* poem, and was anxious to save his energies for that; he had, moreover, always disliked having anything to do

with concert productions of selections from his stage works. But necessity once more persuaded him to violate his convictions. The London offer was accepted. Several of the Bayreuth singers, including Materna, Hill, Schlosser, Unger, Grün, were engaged, and a series of six Wagner concerts announced at the Albert Hall for the fortnight from May 7 to 19, 1877. There was an orchestra of 170, and the first half of each programme was conducted by Wagner, the second by Hans Richter.

"Wagner conducted part of the performances on each occasion, and during the rest of the concert sat in the front row of the orchestra, following the music with obvious interest, and himself the observed of all observers. As a conductor he scarcely did himself justice on this occasion."

There had been no time to establish a perfect sympathy between the leader and the men, and

"Wagner in consequence made the orchestra nervous, and the musicians greatly preferred Hans Richter to him, showing that preference with a demonstrativeness which was probably not very agreeable to the most modest of men and greatest of conductors."[1]

The hopes that these concerts would wipe out the Bayreuth deficit were doomed to failure. Although the audiences were large, the expenses were so enormous that the receipts were swamped. There were as many as nineteen rehearsals; for Wagner, as usual, made the artistic success of the undertaking the prime consideration; and nineteen rehearsals of an orchestra of 170 amount to a formidable figure. Mr. Dannreuther, at whose house Wagner resided, states that "the attendance, though always large, was nothing like what had been

[1] Hueffer, *Half a Century of Music in England*, p. 72 *seq.*

anticipated; the result of the six concerts, a difficulty in making both ends meet." Matters were somewhat amended by two supplementary concerts given on May 28, 29, at reduced prices, and with programmes containing only the most popular pieces. Hueffer relates that

"a very large sum had been promised to Wagner for his personal services in the matter, but when he heard that things were not going well, he declared himself willing to forego all remuneration, with that generosity which, if on occasion he expected from his friends, he was not loth to exercise himself. This Messrs. Hodge & Essex, who behaved throughout in a straightforward and admirable manner, refused to accept, and a sum of £700 was eventually remitted to Bayreuth. But this Wagner did not expect when he left London, and the last words he uttered standing at the carriage window as the train steamed out of Victoria Station were: 'All is lost except honor.'"

When the disastrous result of the Albert Hall Festival became known, Hueffer continues,—

"a number of men determined to wipe off the stain on the English artistic character, and a subscription was opened, without Wagner's knowledge, and soon reached the sum of £561, which was duly sent to Wagner. But once again he gave an instance of that contempt for money which he invariably showed when he had any money to contemn. He had made arrangements that the royalties to come from the performances of *The Ring* at Munich should be set aside to cover the debt of the Bayreuth Theatre, and the sum collected in England was accordingly returned to the subscribers, one of whom wrote in his surprise, 'Strange things happen in the realm of music.'"

This third and last visit to London lasted from April 30 to June 4. During this time he was much lionized and dined, especially by the various German clubs. He also went to Windsor, by special invitation of the

Queen, with whom he had a long audience. The Queen had been prevented from attending the concerts, but the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Edinburgh, and other members of the royal family had been present. The composer also liked to mix in the society of English people, and Hueffer tells of an interesting evening at Mr. Dannreuther's, when he was the life and soul of a distinguished gathering, including G. H. Lewes and his wife, George Eliot, who on this occasion remarked to Madame Wagner, with her usual straightforwardness: "Your husband does not like Jews; my husband is a Jew."

One more interesting incident of this London episode must be referred to here, as it throws a bright light on Wagner's personality. It is the amusing account given by Mr. Hubert Herkomer (*Portfolio* 1880) of how he painted his famous portrait for the German Athenæum Club: —

"The whole business of the portrait was disagreeable to him, but I was at least allowed free admission to his abode [12 Orme Square], so this 'seeing,' instead of 'sittings' went on for nearly a month; my patience was tried sorely and my independence got chafed. But I was wrought up to a curious pitch of excitement during this training, for I was affected by the personal power of the man over those around him, by the magic of his music, and by the face of this poet-musician, which, when stirred by emotion, was a grand reflection of his work.

"Now I doubt whether any man, since Napoleon I., has been known to exercise such powers of fascination over his admirers as Richard Wagner does daily, and will do to the termination of his physical life. You lose your identity when in his presence; you are sadly inclined to forget that there is something else in the world besides Wagner and his music. You are under an influence that sets every nerve at its highest key. He has been able to make people frantic with enthusiasm. . . .

"Wagner was in my mind day and night, — a constant vision that barred out every other thought, willing or unwilling, — and it was in a moment of anger arising from this constant putting off of the sittings, that I determined to try what my memory could furnish, and, with his face only inwardly visible to me, I set to work. I worked all day, and it grew, I know not how. The next day I worked still harder and more excitedly, and finished the portrait. On the third day I took it to Wagner.

"Up to that time he had but suffered me to be near him, paying little more attention to me than to an animal, but from the moment that he saw his portrait his demeanor changed, and never did a man show admiration more truly and heartily than did Richard Wagner on this occasion, and ever since, to me. How I had done it puzzled him. 'You use witchcraft,' he said to me. So then he was ready to sit to me, and I was intensely eager, not to say nervous, to compare my impressional portrait with the original subject."

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Leaving London on June 4, Wagner visited Ems, Heidelberg, Triebschen, and other places, before returning to Bayreuth, about the end of July. The Heidelberg visit is memorable because here, for the first time in Germany (on July 8), he read his *Parsifal* poem to a circle of friends in the picturesquely situated Schloss hotel of which Mark Twain has told Americans so much. The $3500 which the London Festival had netted him did little to diminish the deficit of $37,500. While that remained, it was useless to think of repeating the Festival. Practical friends were indeed of opinion that a second Festival would be profitable; for the theatre was now built and the scenery on hand, so that the expenses would be greatly reduced, while tickets could be sold at a much lower rate than the $75 asked for a cycle of four evenings in 1876. But apart from the fact that

this possible financial success of a second Festival was a mere guess, there were other serious impediments. It would have been difficult once more to obtain from unwilling Intendants permission for their singers and players to spend a whole summer at Bayreuth; and the Meister, besides, had had, as he says, "personal experiences" which made him undesirous to play the rôle of impresario again. So the plan of repeating the *Ring* at once was abandoned in favor of a bigger scheme, which seemed of such importance to its author that he invited representatives of the Wagner Societies to meet him at Bayreuth on September 15. Many came, and the meeting was held on the stage of the Festival Theatre. Before communicating his plans for the future, the Meister spoke for half an hour on the financial and other aspects of the Festival, giving many valuable bits of information which have been utilized in the preceding pages of this biography.[1]

The plan itself was to make the Bayreuth Theatre a Dramatic High School where singers, players, and conductors could learn to interpret not only the works of Wagner, but of the classical masters in a more correct

[1] Of this valuable speech there exists, fortunately, a stenographic report. Wagner had expressly desired that a stenographer should be employed, but as it seemed desirable to exclude non-members, Burgomaster Franz Muncker himself undertook the task. It was not an easy one; for, as he explains in his introductory remarks (Kürschner's *Wagner Jahrbuch*, 1886, 197-8), the speaker not only continued half an hour without interruption, but he spoke, as usual, very rapidly, in a chatty, conversational manner, and his thoughts were constantly running away with his words; so that sentences were abbreviated, parts of them "swallowed," and connecting links omitted, or crowded aside by a new thought that suddenly presented itself. While this gave the speech a fragmentary character, it made it all the more vivid and forceful, for it seemed like a direct communication of thoughts too eager and impatient to clothe themselves in orderly arrays of academic words.

style than prevailed at the German opera-houses. Wagner declared himself willing to attend the exercises at least three times a week. All instruction would be gratis, but no pupils, of course, would be accepted except such as had already acquired technical proficiency, so that all the lessons could be devoted to the art of interpretation. The first year, 1878, was to be given up to classical chamber music, symphonies, and vocal art; in 1879 there would be preliminary rehearsals of the *Flying Dutchman*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Lohengrin*, which operas would be performed in 1880, to be followed in 1881, by *Tristan* and *Meistersinger*, and in 1882, by a repetition of the *Nibelung's Ring;* while 1883 was to see the first performance of *Parsifal.*[1] For the purpose of carrying out this six years' Festival plan a central Bayreuth Society of Patrons was formed, of which the former independent Wagner Societies became branches, and each member pledged himself to pay fifteen marks a year to cover expenses and secure funds in advance.

What was the result of all these efforts? The Dramatic High School was to be opened on Jan. 1, 1878, but, according to Hans von Wolzogen, the number of candidates who sent in their names "could be counted on the fingers of one hand," so that Wagner was compelled to postpone his plan to "more favorable times." And why should young German singers, players, and conductors have come to learn of a man whom the leading newspapers continued to denounce as a humbug and an enemy of all good music? Why should the Germans, as a nation, have given him a chance to show, before he died, how his operas should be interpreted? Preposter-

[1] For details, see Vol. X. pp. 17–26.

ous idea! Did Beethoven, Mozart, or Weber have such a chance? No; why, then, should he have it, the presumptuous old charlatan?

BAYREUTHER BLÄTTER — LAST ESSAYS

All his life Wagner had longed to show by practical example how his operas should be interpreted. Three times only had he been able to do so, — at Dresden, at Munich, and at Bayreuth. In the first-named cities his activity was temporary; in Bayreuth he had hoped to make it permanent, but his hopes were dashed against the walls of national indifference. Nothing was left but to resort once more to the critical pen, much as he would have preferred to devote all his time to composition and performance. As a sort of a substitute for the impossible High School, a periodical was founded, with the name of *Bayreuther Blätter*, which became the organ of communication to the Wagner Societies. This publication has survived its founder. In its volumes one may find a great deal of verbose twaddle, a great many essays as soporific as opium, written by well-meaning but witless enthusiasts and would-be philosophers. There are also not a few articles and documents of permanent æsthetic and historic interest. But what gives the *Bayreuther Blätter* historic significance is the fact that in its pages first appeared almost all the essays which Wagner wrote in the last six years of his life, and which now make up the greater part of Volume X. of his Collected Works. Among these are some of his very best papers in point of style as of thought. The least valuable of them are those which deal with political, social, and philosophical topics, entitled *What*

is German? and *Religion and Art.* More readable are *Modern, Public and Popularity, The Public in Time and Space.* In these, as in the two first named, he makes out a thoroughly bad case for the world we live in, especially for Germany, where everything is going to the dogs, thanks largely to Semitic aggressions. Much in these papers is simply an echo of Schopenhauer's pessimism, intensified by the writer's personal disappointments in his Bayreuth Festival schemes.

A foretaste of what the four-volume autobiography will be, is given by three important suggestive essays,— *A Retrospect on the Stage-Play-Festival of* 1876, *The Stage-Consecration-Play in Bayreuth* 1882, and *Account of the Performance of a Youthful Work* (the first symphony). Hardly less valuable are three other essays — *On composing Poetry and Music, On the Composing of Operatic Poetry and Music in Particular,* and *On the Application of Music to the Drama.* These papers no admirer of their author should fail to read. They contain some of the most incisive criticisms on his own and other music, written in a more concrete and lucid style than his earlier theoretical works. Considerations of space permit me to refer to three suggestive points only: the remarks on poetic and melodic accents (203–217) with some exquisite sarcasm on "melody"; the extremely suggestive pages (242–250) in which he explains why a dramatist may and should modulate more freely than a symphonist (instructive illustrations are added); and the timely warning to ambitious and reckless young composers contained in this passage: —

"It seems that already a very large proportion of the public finds many things, yes, almost everything, in my dramatic music

thoroughly natural, and accordingly pleasing, while the 'professors' are still crying murder over it. If these gentlemen were to assign to me one of their holy chairs, they would perhaps be still more astounded on seeing what caution and moderation, especially in harmonic effects, I would counsel their pupils, to whom I would submit as first rule that they should never leave a key as long as what they have to say can be said in it."

Reference may as well be made here to an additional volume which appeared two years after Wagner's death. It is entitled *Entwürfe, Gedanken, Fragmente* (Concepts, Thoughts, and Fragments), and contains the chips from his workshop — aphorisms on the various subjects that interested him: on art, religion, philosophy; on style, modulation, composers, and poets, critics, genius; programmes to *Tristan, Meistersinger,* and *Parsifal* preludes, etc.

VIVISECTION AND VEGETARIANISM

In August, 1879, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in Dresden received a note from Richard Wagner, who expressed his desire to assist it to the utmost extent of his powers. This led to a correspondence with Ernst von Weber, whose illustrated pamphlet, *The Torture-Chambers of Science,* had, in 1878, started the agitation against cruel physiological experiments on living animals. In his second letter Wagner forwarded one hundred marks, with the promise of a like sum every three months for the funds.

"My son," he says in this letter, "may learn and become whatever he pleases; one thing only I shall urge him to do; namely, to learn enough of surgery to be able to render first assistance to men or animals, and also, to steel himself — somewhat more than his father — against the sight of physical suffering."

Further remarks followed, which led Weber to ask him to expand them into a public letter on Vivisection, in the hope of interesting his numerous admirers in the movement. The request was followed. The Public Letter appeared, first as a supplement to the *Bayreuther Blätter*, then as a pamphlet of which several thousand copies were printed, some for gratuitous distribution, others for sale for the benefit of the Society; the expenses of printing being borne by the writer himself. In this essay, as usual, Wagner is nothing if not radical. He denies that experiments in vivisection lead to any other result than the gratification of the "vanity and stupid curiosity" of scientific virtuosi; yet the *utility* of these tortures is always — and this is what particularly angers him — put forward as a sufficient excuse for the cruelties inflicted in the name of science. Now, he has such a high opinion of the unselfishness of animals that he believes that whereas man uses his reason chiefly to be "more animal than any animal" (as Mephistopheles puts it), an animal "would willingly allow itself to be tortured for its master if it could be made clear to its intellect that the weal of its human friend was involved." But this gives us no right to torture them for our selfish purposes. On the contrary, if our civilization were not such a wretched farce, religion and the state would recognize and assert the legal right of animals to the benefits of the fundamental law of morality, which is compassion, or sympathy with the sufferings of other beings. But no one thinks of this; if it can be proved that it is *useful to us* to torture animals, the law protects the tormentors.[1]

[1] The Public Letter which develops these ideas is reprinted in Vol. X. His twelve private letters to Ernst von Weber on this topic have appeared in a special brochure (Dresden, 1883).

Logically considered, such love of animals must lead to vegetarianism, and Wagner did not shrink from his conclusion in theory, at any rate. In his essay on *Religion and Art* (X. 311) he shows a disposition to trace the "degeneration" of the human race to its having fallen from grace by eating flesh, and makes the amusing suggestion that if in a northern climate a meat-diet be considered necessary, there are parts of the globe — South America and South Africa — large enough to sustain the world's flesh-eating population on a vegetarian basis! Some of the foolish Wagnerites, who took every utterance of the Meister as gospel law, started a vegetarian club at Bayreuth, but it is not known whether their Prophet partook of their insipid messes; certainly he was not a vegetarian at home.

THE TRAVELLING WAGNER THEATRE

Ever since the first performance of *Rienzi* in Dresden it had become more and more a custom of musical pilgrims to go to one city or another to hear special representations of Wagner's operas, and this custom had reached its extraordinary climax at Bayreuth. A few years after that Festival the process was reversed: Bayreuth travelled through Europe; and this is the way it came about. According to the original plans and hopes, the *Nibelung's Ring* was to be reserved during its author's lifetime for Bayreuth exclusively. But with that $37,500 deficit, and a possibility of increasing it, a repetition of the Festival was out of the question. The efforts to cover the deficit by appealing to the patrons, and by means of concerts in London, had failed. In this emergency, King Ludwig once more came to the rescue and

diminished "the burdens which would otherwise have crushed me" (X. 147). The composer's great indebtedness to the King is brought out in these words from that memorable Bayreuth speech of Sept. 15, 1877:—

"His Majesty the King of Bavaria, in fact, already possesses the right of producing the *Nibelung's Ring*, and it was simply an act of generous concession on his part that I was permitted to produce it first here in Bayreuth. But now he will be entitled to his rights."

The reference here is to the compact made between the composer and the King that in return for an annual pension the *Ring* should be completed and placed at the King's disposal; and surely the *Ring* was royal payment for that royal pension. But the King not only gave Bayreuth precedence; he also advanced $50,000 towards the purchase of the scenic outfit for the Festival. This sum was not a present, however, but by contract with the secretary of the royal treasury the scenery thus provided belonged to the King, after it had done service in Bayreuth. Now came the question of the deficit. King Ludwig would have doubtless generously permitted his friend to retain exclusive control of the *Ring* for some years; but the Intendant of the Munich Opera saw in the deficit a way of securing possession of *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*. The other two parts of the Tetralogy had already been given there; and the production of the whole work during the tourist months would no doubt prove very profitable. Hence the Intendant offered to cover the deficit in return for permission to produce the whole *Ring*—an offer which he could make cheerfully, since the sum forwarded to Bayreuth would be saved on the ready-made scenery forwarded to him from Bayreuth.

So every one was benefited, except that the composer had to give up his pet scheme, the Bayreuth monopoly of the *Ring*.

Thus Munich secured the right to the *Ring*, which was first heard there as a complete Tetralogy in November, 1878. Vienna and Leipzig also received permission to produce the whole Tetralogy on the express stipulation that they should lend their artists for future Festivals at Bayreuth. Further concessions Wagner did not intend to make, for if the *Ring* were given in too many cities the remote Bayreuth would be apt to be neglected by pilgrims, and the High School plan frustrated. When he found, however, that within four years after the Festival, only 1100 of his forty million countrymen cared enough for his ideal of producing correct performances during his lifetime of all his works, to contribute eleven dollars towards that end, he concluded he might as well let the theatres have the *Ring* without further delay. The first cities to follow Munich (with the complete *Ring*) were Leipzig (1879), Vienna (1879), and Hamburg (1880).[1] Other cities followed rapidly, but in almost all cases Wagner was vexed by the absurd partiality shown by the managers for the *Walküre*. I have already commented on the ridiculous predilection of the Germans for the *Walküre*, which is certainly inferior to *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*, both musically and dramatically. From Jan. 1, 1876, to Oct. 31, 1891, there were given in Germany the following number of performances: *Rheingold*, 358; *Walküre*, 823; *Siegfried*, 322; *Götterdämmerung*, 314. These figures will make future generations smile; but what annoyed Wagner chiefly was not this silly prefer-

[1] *Wagner Jahrbuch*, 1886, p. 344. Glasenapp, II. 503.

ence for the *Walküre*, but the fact that, with very few exceptions, the managers insisted on mutilating the scheme of the Tetralogy by beginning with the *Walküre* instead of with *Rheingold*. To one of these exceptions, Director von Loën of Weimar, he wrote on Oct. 22, 1877: —

"That's what I call devotion! To risk it with *Rheingold!* What more can I say than 'Good Luck!' . . . I am glad that you do not, like all the other managers, ask for the *Walküre* only: to these I refuse all. But he who is willing to begin with *Rheingold* is bold and gets — the whole."

The best of these early productions of the *Ring* were those at Leipzig, at least as far as the ensemble and general spirit were concerned; for here Wagner's young favorite, the magnetic Anton Seidl, presided over the performances, and the manager was the enterprising Angelo Neumann who, two years later, conceived the audacious plan of travelling about Europe with a special Nibelung company. Wagner's consent was given, the performing right in various cities secured from the publisher, Schott (who had paid $10,000 for the scores); and on Sept. 1, 1881, the first of these representations was given at Breslau. The company consisted of eleven members, with Anton Seidl as conductor, and Hedwig Reicher-Kindermann, Marianne Brandt, Auguste Kraus (now Mrs. Seidl), Katharina Klafsky, Anton Schott, Julius Liban, and Georg Unger among the singers. Complete performances of the *Ring* (with the necessary cuts, sanctioned by Wagner) were given in Breslau, Königsberg, Danzig, Hanover, Bremen, Barmen, Berlin, Amsterdam, Brussels, Aachen, Düsseldorf, Karlsruhe, Darmstadt, Strassburg, and Stuttgart, where the hun-

dredth performance was witnessed on April 4, 1883. In the meantime, fifty-two Wagner concerts had also been given.

The success of the undertaking was so great that Herr Neumann decided to go to Italy, contrary to Wagner's strongly expressed desire that this should not be done. But as the composer had died (on Feb. 13), there was no longer any obstacle, and two months after his death a row of Nibelung gondolas was seen moving down the Grand Canal in Venice, one of them being guarded by the Dragon, Fafner. In Venice, where Wagner had died, and where he had enjoyed great personal popularity, the success of the *Ring* was assured. On April 19 there was a memorial performance in honor of its composer, in front of the Palazzo Vendramin, in which he had died. Mr. Seidl's orchestra played the Marcia Reale, the *Tannhäuser* overture, and Siegfried's Death March to an audience which filled over four hundred gondolas. In Bologna, too, the *Ring* was received with enthusiasm — even *Rheingold*, which elsewhere gave less pleasure than the other dramas. The song of the Rhine-maidens had to be sung twice, and — what is a great deal more remarkable, and justifies the title of "the Italian Bayreuth" for Bologna — Mime's very Wagnerian passage, beginning "Sorglose Schmiede," had to be repeated by Lieban *three* times! The Romans, on the other hand, showed little sympathy for the new art; the audiences were large, but cold. At Milan only a concert could be given on account of difficulties with the Italian proprietors of the scores. Leaving Italy by way of Trieste, the company gave a cycle there, and another at Buda-Pesth, whereupon the members disbanded, having given 133

Nibelung performances, and fifty-eight Wagner concerts between the dates of Sept. 1, 1882, and June 5, 1883.[1]

The only regrettable result of this Nibelung tour was that Frau Reicher-Kindermann, whom some judges considered an even greater Brünnhilde than Materna, died at Trieste. She ought not to have gone to Italy with Neumann; she had been severely ill, and yet persisted in singing in spite of fainting spells and partial loss of voice. Jealousy of another singer aggravated her malady; at Trieste, in a fit of rage, she accompanied her friends to a tavern, after singing in *Götterdämmerung;* to subdue her fever she drank glass after glass of ice-cold beer. At two o'clock she was seized with chills and had to be taken to the hotel. A few days later she was dead. She had been engaged to be a member of the Royal Opera at Berlin; and when Intendant Hülsen heard of her death, he wrote to her father: "Alas, I knew beforehand what would happen in the poor state of her health, and I told her when she bid me good-bye: 'If you *continue to participate in this swindle,* you will not endure it, and your appearance in Berlin is more than doubtful.' . . . Now German art is the poorer by a great talent, *and to what end?*"

THE "CIRCUS HÜLSEN" AGAIN

In order not to interrupt the narrative of the Nibelung conquest of Europe, I have somewhat anticipated events, and must now return to an important and scandalous occurrence in 1881 — the first performance of the *Nibe-*

[1] I owe most of the above details about the Nibelung travels to two interesting pamphlets by Inspector J. Juhasz, *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (Darmstadt, 1883) and *Das Wagner Theater in Italien* (Berlin, 1884).

lung's Ring in Berlin. That it was an important event is a matter of course; why it was scandalous remains to be explained. Any unsophisticated person would naturally suppose that the Berlin Intendant must have been one of the very first to secure the right of performing the Tetralogy. Had not Wagner, ever since 1875, been the most popular of all opera-composers in Berlin?[1] Was it not incumbent on the Berlin Intendant — if only for business reasons — to produce a work of which all Europe was talking, and about which a small library had already been written?

Foolish expectations! Hülsen wanted the *Walküre*, and only the *Walküre;* the other dramas, he believed, would not pay the expense of mounting. This Botho von Hülsen, the reader will remember, was the same man who had kept *Tannhäuser* in quarantine for ten years (and until forty other theatres had given it); the same man who waited nine years before he could make up his mind that *Lohengrin* was worth producing. These operas were now approaching their two hundredth performance (the three hundredth of both came in 1892). Did this make any impression on Hülsen? Any man of common sense, after such an experience, would have had a little less confidence in himself, and a little more in Wagner's genius. Unluckily, Hülsen was one of those members of the "aristocracy" who, as Wagner remarked in one of his letters, were appointed Intendants of Ger-

[1] It is interesting to trace the growth of Wagnerism in Berlin, in spite of Hülsen's heroic efforts to down it. In 1859–60 Wagner had only 9 evenings as against Auber, 22; Mozart, 19; Meyerbeer, 17; Weber, 12; and Donizetti, 9. In 1861–2 Spontini leads; the year following Wagner has only 4! In 1870 Meyerbeer goes ahead, and in 1875 Wagner wins; in 1876–7 he had 37 evenings, and this preponderance had grown in 1890–1 to 80, or about five times as many as any other composer.

man royal theatres, not because of their knowledge, but because of their ignorance of art. He had been brought up as a soldier, and he was interested in amateur theatricals, which latter circumstance induced King Frederic William IV. one day to offer him, to his great surprise, the post of Intendant of the royal theatres. He assumed his duties in 1851, and for thirty-four years mismanaged the Royal Opera in Berlin; indeed, after 1867, he also had under his control the opera-houses of Hanover, Cassel, and Wiesbaden.

In 1860 Wagner wrote to Liszt that a complete revolution in Berlin operatic affairs would be needed before he could have any hopes for himself. This revolution, alas, did not come till three years after his death (Hülsen died in 1886). After the Bayreuth Festival, Hülsen, as I have just stated, wanted the *Walküre;* but he could not get it except on condition of producing the whole Tetralogy. At last, after waiting four years, Hülsen showed a willingness to accede to this condition. But Wagner, with his customary detestable "stubbornness" and "arrogance," insisted that the *Nibelung's Ring* should be performed *correctly* in Berlin. In view of the fact that in no other German cities such slovenly and incorrect performances of his operas were given as in Berlin, he insisted that he should have something to say about the choice of singers, and that Anton Seidl should conduct. Hülsen objected to these conditions, as well as to the proviso that the four dramas should be given in proper order; and so the matter was dropped.

In this emergency another manager appeared on the scene — Angelo Neumann. This enterprising impresario, after giving several successful series of the *Ring*

in Leipzig, concluded to take his company to Berlin. At first he offered to give his performances at the Royal Opera House; but trouble again arose in regard to conductor and singers; some of the singers at the Royal Opera contended, and with justice, that if the *Ring* were given at their theatre, they who had helped to interpret it at Bayreuth, should help in Berlin too. Emperor William had given Hülsen authority to do whatever he pleased in the matter, and Hülsen accordingly pleased to drop it. He tried to put the responsibility on the singers, but it is unnecessary to point out that the blame for the disgraceful fact that the Berliners did not hear the first performance of the greatest work of the greatest German dramatic composer at the Royal Opera, which receives a subvention of $150,000 a year for the furtherance of national art interests, rests entirely on Botho von Hülsen, whose duty it was to throw open the doors to Wagner and his work on any conditions whatever.[1]

The consequence of Hülsen's extraordinary conduct was that the *Nibelung's Ring* had to be given in the sub-

[1] After these revelations the reader will not wonder at the above-cited reference of Hülsen's to the Wagner "swindle" to which Frau Reicher-Kindermann sacrificed her life, with the spiteful addition, "and to what end?" It is significant that Frau von Hülsen, in the biography of her husband, has only one brief reference to Wagner. It was a topic which, for her husband's credit, she did well to ignore. We know from the correspondence with Liszt that Wagner wrote Hülsen not a few long and imploring letters. Were these letters preserved? and if so, why did not Hélène von Hülsen print them? One ought not to laugh at an obituary notice, but I am sure many Germans must have laughed at the statement in the Leipzig *Signale* (No. 55, 1886) that "in Hülsen were combined, in a rare degree, all faculties needed for the difficult and responsible position of a royal Intendant"; when the fact was notorious throughout Germany that during Hülsen's régime, in spite of some good singers and a first-class orchestra, the Berlin Opera gave performances far inferior to those to be heard in any German city of the first or second rank.

urban Victoria Theatre, ill-suited for such a purpose. But with Anton Seidl as conductor, and Materna, Vogl, Reicher-Kindermann, and Schelper among the singers, success was assured. Four times the *Ring* was repeated. Wagner himself attended on several evenings, and was made the subject of a great ovation.[1] In the following year the company returned, and gave Nibelung performances for several months.

COMPOSITION OF PARSIFAL

It is a curious fact that, with the exception of *Tristan*, all of Wagner's dramatic poems were conceived before he had ended his thirty-fifth year. The *Meistersinger* plot was fully sketched even before *Lohengrin*, while the germs of the whole *Nibelung Tetralogy* are contained in *Siegfried's Death*, which was written soon after *Lohengrin*. The origin of *Parsifal*, too, can be traced to this period, for it is obvious that not a few things in the projected and sketched (1848) but abandoned drama *Jesus of Nazareth* (which was referred to in an earlier chapter) were transferred to his last work. Frau Wille relates in her *Rundschau* reminiscences that she was displeased when Wagner one day represented to his friends, with his vivid enthusiasm, how the "Prophet of Nazareth," loved by the sinful Magdalena with earthly love, might be made into a stage-picture of touching beauty: "I

[1] There is one more extraordinary fact in regard to Neumann's Nibelung travels that must be mentioned here. When Neumann took his company from Florence to Rome, the government charged him only *one-quarter* the regular railway rates ($400); whereas the Prussian officials charged him $1500 for the short trip from Breslau to Königsberg, refusing to give the discount usually allowed to theatrical companies.

looked at him in astonishment, and left the room. . . . In the last gift of his genius, in Parsifal, the knightly priest, and in Kundry redeemed from the influence of evil powers, we find again what he had in his mind as early as the year 1852";[1] that is, five years after the completion of *Lohengrin*, and thirty years before the actual completion of the *Parsifal* score.

A still more interesting revelation regarding the growth of the *Parsifal* plan is contained in a letter to Praeger, dated April 8, 1865, in which he says of King Ludwig: "He is so strikingly handsome that he might pose as the King of the Jews, and — this in confidence — I am seriously reflecting on the Christian tragedy; possibly something may come of it." Something did come of it; for on Sept. 26 of the same year he wrote to Frau Wille: "I am now completing the *Nibelungen:* a *Parsifal* is already sketched." The versification, however, was not completed till after the Bayreuth Festival. He took the manuscript to London, and read it on May 17, 1877, for the first time, to a circle of friends, in Mr. Dannreuther's house (12 Orme Square). Two months later, he read it to his friends in Heidelberg, and in September, to the delegates of the Wagner Societies, at his own house in

[1] It is said that the Good-Friday-Spell music also belongs to this year. Mr. Seidl has told me an interesting incident relating to the music of the Flower Girl score. When he first became Wagner's secretary he heard him one day playing those enchanting strains, which naturally made an indelible impression on him. Some years later, when he was putting the sketches into rough shape for practical use, Wagner played various parts for him. When he came to the Flower Girl music, Mr. Seidl remarked, "Ah, I know that." Whereupon Wagner jumped up excitedly, almost angrily, and wanted to know where he had heard it. He was pacified on being told where, but for a long time the shock affected him, for he often said to Mr. Seidl: "Well, have you found any more familiar things in my music?"

val fund had reached about $32,500, to which $2500 more were added later on. With this it would have been rash to risk a Festival, had not King Ludwig once more come to the rescue by placing at Wagner's disposal the forces of the Munich opera-house for this Festival and others to come; in return for which Munich received the exclusive right to the performance of the early opera, *The Fairies.*[1]

The newspapers, with few exceptions, not only did all they could to discredit the Festival, but some of them went so far as to promulgate, at the critical moment, a mendacious report that there was an epidemic of small-pox at Bayreuth. Their anger was aroused by the plan permitting only members of the various Wagner Societies to attend the first two performances. Some of them naïvely remarked that this measure was taken from fear of the critics! It was really taken, as a Berlin journalist justly explained, because "the Wagnerites desire to be alone at the first performances, so as to be able to enjoy the new art-work without being disturbed in their devotion by rude utterances and stupid raillery, as they were at the *Nibelung* representations." Once more, however, the opposition failed in its attempts to crush Wagner, the only result of its malice being that the Festival proved less successful financially than it would have otherwise.

A few preliminary rehearsals had already been held in the summer of 1881. As there was only one drama to be given this time, a month was deemed sufficient time for the rehearsals of 1882. The first performance was announced for July 26, the last for Aug. 29. The task

[1] Unexpectedly, perhaps, this exchange proved a very profitable business for the Munich Opera.

of securing singers had been much less formidable than in 1876, not only because there were fewer rôles, but because the number of good Wagner singers was now much larger — so large, indeed, that there was no difficulty in securing three casts;[1] an arrangement which not only provided the charm of variety, but gave the eminent artists who participated an opportunity to learn from each other. This had been one of Wagner's chief motives in organizing the Festivals. He expected that each vocalist-actor would do justice to a different trait of the rôle impersonated, so that the others could perfect their conceptions in that direction. This result was attained; those who heard the last performances could not help noting how much all the singers had grown in one month. Besides the soloists, there was a chorus of 84 men and women, 50 boys, and an orchestra of 105, of whom 73 belonged to the Munich Opera, whose conductor, H. Levi, naturally presided over the performances.

A few days before the first performance, the pilgrims began to arrive in large numbers. Those who expected to be allowed to attend the last rehearsals, as in 1876, were disappointed. They could not but be pleased, on the other hand, with the evidences of new life and growth presented by Bayreuth. The money which in 1876 had flown into the coffers of the citizens encouraged the magistrates to build, the very next year, a fine system of water-works, adding much to the comfort of tourists, and providing the means for a fountain and precautions against fire, at the theatre on the hill. A new, com-

[1] **Parsifal: Winkelmann, Jäger, Gudehus, (Vogl). Kundry: Materna, Brandt, Malten. Gurnemanz: Scaria, Siehr. Amfortas: Reichmann, Beck. Titurel: Kindermann. Klingsor: Hill, Fuchs. Leader of the flower girls, Lilli Lehmann.**

modious railway station had also been built, and a number of new houses erected in which the pilgrims found more comfortable quarters than many of them had been doomed to in 1876. The local paper pointed with pride to the vast number of letters and telegrams despatched at the post-office. The shop windows were filled with photographs relating to the Festival, and everything connected therewith. There were Parsifal cravats, and Parsifal beer, and Grail cups of all sizes. In short, every branch of industry had assumed a Parsifal tinge. Every Bayreuther was an ardent admirer of Wagner, though he had never heard a note of his music, except that supplied by the practising trombone-player in his back parlor; and those visitors who doubted Wagner's genius were charged a mark more for everything they bought.[1] Before describing the first performance let us, as usual, cast a glance at the work to be produced.

STORY OF PARSIFAL

Parsifal is the father of Lohengrin, and Wagner's last drama gratifies the curiosity of those who would like to know more about the Holy Grail from which Lohengrin came to succor the unjustly accused Elsa, and to which he is obliged to return because she breaks her promise. The Grailsburg is situated in the neighborhood of the Castle Montsalvat, in Spain. It was built by King Titurel and his knights as a sanctuary for the Holy Grail

[1] The Wagnerization of Bayreuth has continued since 1882. In 1886 the name of the Rennweg, on which the villa Wahnfried is situated, was changed to Richard Wagner Strasse. There is also a Siegfried Strasse, etc. Moreover, during the tourist season, Nuremberg and even Munich have practically become suburbs of Bayreuth, all the shop windows being filled with Wagner-literature and pictures.

which was brought to them by angels to be guarded by them against the enemies of Christianity. The Grail, in Wagner's poem, is the cup that was used at the Last Supper, and that subsequently received the crucified Saviour's blood. This cup has the same qualities that the earth has for Antæus, or Freia for the gods in Walhalla — it rejuvenates and invigorates the holy knights, who are privileged to behold it whenever the King uncovers it. When King Titurel found the end of his allotted life approaching, his son Amfortas was crowned King of the brotherhood. But Amfortas succumbed to a temptation which had already brought misfortune upon many of the knights: he fell a victim to the wiles of Klingsor, the wizard, whose castle is not far off. Klingsor, the representative of heathen sensuality, had once endeavored to secure admission to the holy brotherhood. But he lacked the requisite purity of heart and conduct, and freedom from worldly desires, to obtain which he resorted to self-mutilation. Repulsed from the Grailsburg, he swore vengeance on the knights, and in his magic castle he now holds many of them as captives to the charms of the bevy of lovely maidens whom he has gathered for this purpose. King Amfortas, when he went forth to annihilate the sorcerer and his castle, fell a victim to the wiles of Kundry, the most beautiful of the unlucky females enslaved by Klingsor. Kundry is a sort of female Wandering Jew, the Herodias of German legend, who laughed at the Saviour when he bore his cross. For this she was condemned to "cursed laughter," and to wander about the earth until she could again find a saviour to release her from her curse by his love. Klingsor had gained control over her through his

magic arts, and now compels her to aid him in reducing the number of faithful knights, so that he may ultimately satisfy his desire of gaining possession of the Grail. While King Amfortas is ensnared by Kundry's charms, Klingsor snatches from him his holy spear — the spear with which Longinus had pierced the Saviour's side, and which Titurel had received with the Grail. With this spear he inflicts on Amfortas a painful wound which refuses to heal, and henceforth forever exposes him to the most woful torments.

Act I. These events, which precede the drama proper, are made known to the audience in an epic or episodic form during the first act, which also contains some of the most stirring dramatic incidents in the play. When the curtain is drawn, Gurnemanz, a robust and hale old knight, and two young pages are seen asleep under a tree. Gurnemanz awakes at the sound of invisible trombones blowing a morning call in the direction of the Grailsburg. He rouses his companions, and bids them go to the lake and prepare the wounded King's morning bath. As they retire toward the lake, which is seen in the background, they suddenly behold a horse, with a female rider, dashing wildly along, almost flying. It is Kundry, who in hours of freedom always endeavors to atone by some good service for the harm she does the knights while under the influence of Klingsor's spell. She is arrayed in a short dress, held together by a girdle of snakeskins; her black hair flows in disorder over her shoulders; her complexion is dark brown, and her eyes piercingly black, now wild in expression, and anon fixed in a dead stare. In her hand she has a small flask, which she gives to Gurnemanz, and then throws herself on the ground, exhausted.

The King's approach is now heard. He is conveyed in a litter, accompanied by knights and esquires. From Gurnemanz he receives the flask, and hears that Kundry has brought it as balm for his wound from Arabia. He expresses his gratitude, but has no hope in the remedy, for he knows he can expect a cure only through one whom the Grail has announced to him as his saviour: "By pity enlightened, a guileless fool; wait for him, my chosen tool" — these were the words that once appeared in magic letters on the rim of the holy vessel while he lay before it in fervent prayer. The procession now moves on toward the lake, while the esquires remain taunting the mysterious Kundry, when suddenly the whizz of an arrow, imitated in a strikingly realistic manner by the orchestra, followed by weird, swan-motive harmonies from *Lohengrin*, is heard. A wounded swan slowly flies across the lake, and then falls down dying. The Parsifal motive announces the appearance of the culprit who has thus ruthlessly killed one of the animals sacred in these precincts. In an affecting passage, in which words and music are alike beautiful, Gurnemanz reproaches Parsifal, who at first boasts of his skill at having killed the bird "on the wing," but after listening to the old knight, follows a sudden impulse and breaks his bow in pieces. The question who he is and where from, he professes to be unable to answer, when Kundry interrupts the dialogue and announces that he is the son of Gamuret, who gave birth to him after the death of his father, who fell in battle. To save her son from a similar fate she reared him in a deep forest, ignorant of the world and his parentage.

Parsifal now remembers that one day he saw some

armed horsemen, with beautiful horses, whom he endeavored to follow. Soon he lost sight of them, and, with self-constructed weapons, fought his way through the various dangers that beset him. Kundry replies that his mother is dead — that his departure broke her heart; whereupon Parsifal is seized by such sudden regret and horror that he threatens violence to the unhappy messenger of these tidings; but Gurnemanz protects her from his fury. A sudden trembling and fatigue now overcome Kundry, who retires into the forest to sleep. The magic motive of Klingsor in the orchestra explains that it is his spell which calls her thus to his castle. Gurnemanz suspects that Parsifal may be the "guileless fool" who is chosen to relieve the King, and accordingly invites him to follow him to the Grailsburg, in the hope that the sight of the suffering King might "enlighten him through pity," and thus make him the chosen tool of redemption. As they seem to walk from left to right, the scene gradually changes; the forest disappears, and wild rock takes its place; a door opens amidst walls of stone, which they enter. Sounds of bells and trombones are heard coming nearer and nearer. At last they arrive in a large hall, ending above in a vaulted dome, through which alone light is admitted. A door opens on each side, through one of which the Knights of the Grail enter in procession, singing a solemn chorus. While they take places at two long tables, their voices are joined by those of youths in the mid-height of the dome, and boys' voices at the summit. Through the opposite door another procession enters bearing Amfortas in his litter. It is the King's duty to uncover the Grail, to rejuvenate his knights; but he longs to be relieved of this duty, as it

gives him, too, renewed vitality, and prolongs the agony of his existencce. The voice of Titurel, however, urges him on, and he at last uncovers the Grail. Darkness has meanwhile spread over the hall so that the Grail cup is distinctly seen gradually glowing with a purple lustre. Amfortas raises it, and gently swings it about on all sides — the whole act being accompanied by music of the most super-terrestrial, ethereal character, like a halo of sound. Gurnemanz invites Parsifal to take part in the supper, but Parsifal remains standing, lost in mute astonishment at these proceedings. After the knights have again departed, the disappointed Gurnemanz shakes Parisfal by the arm and bids him depart: —

> "Leave thou our swans in future alone,
> And seek thyself, gander, a goose."

Act II. After an agitated introduction by the orchestra the spectator finds himself transferred to Klingsor's magic castle — at first in the inside of a tower open at its top. Magic implements are scattered about everywhere. Klingsor summons Kundry by lighting a bluish flame in the background of the stage. When Kundry appears he commands her, in spite of her pitiful protests, to use her beauty and persuasiveness to ruin Parsifal, who is already seen by him approaching the castle. He calls out to the knights to defend themselves, but Parsifal soon puts them all to flight. The tower now slowly sinks out of sight, and its place is taken by a magic garden full of tropical vegetation and the most luxuriant large flowers. A number of beautiful damsels in light attire rush on the stage and bewail the loss of their playmates, until they behold Parsifal. While some flirt

about him, others disappear in an arbor, whence they soon return arrayed in flowers, looking like living flowers themselves. Parsifal takes at first a childish delight in the spectacle of all this alluring beauty, but remains unmoved and unyielding, when presently Kundry's voice is heard calling out his name, "Parsifal, remain!" The flower-girls reluctantly retire, not without a parting fling at the "guileless fool," who is now at the mercy of Kundry's charms. With true feminine art she wins his confidence by telling of the last moments of his mother. Parsifal, overcome with grief, sinks down at her feet, when she raises his head, and gives him his mother's last greeting and the first long kiss of love. With an expression of consternation, Parsifal jumps to his feet, and pushes Kundry away. Her kiss makes him clairvoyant: like a sudden pang, it gives him a presentiment of Amfortas's sufferings, and at once the whole situation dawns on him. Hitherto he has only been the "guileless fool"; now he is also, "through pity enlightened." Kundry refuses to listen to his explanation that to grant her his love would condemn her to a new lease of her wretched existence. She invokes a curse on him — a curse which shall compel him to go about the world searching in vain for King Amfortas. Her cries summon Klingsor to the castle wall, whence he hurls Amfortas's holy spear at him. The spear remains suspended over the head of Parsifal, who seizes it and describes the shape of a cross. Instantaneously, as through an earthquake, the castle vanishes; the garden is transformed into a desert, and the maidens lie as withered flowers on the ground. Kundry with a shriek, sinks into a swoon, and Parsifal, before he hastens away, turns to exclaim, "Thou knowest where alone we shall meet again!"

Act III. When the curtain parts again, after a weird and sad introduction of great beauty, depicting Parsifal's long and fruitless search for the Grail, in consequence of Kundry's curse, we see a smiling meadow at the borders of a forest; in the background a simple hermit's hut. It belongs to Gurnemanz, who now appears as a very old man. Strange, mournful sounds, proceeding from behind a bush, induce him to search for their cause. It is Kundry, now again the simple, homely servant of the Grail, and no longer the fascinating queen of Klingsor's flower garden. She is disinclined to speak, but goes into the hut to work. Looking about him, Gurnemanz espies a knight in full armor approaching. He bids him respect the laws of this holy place, which forbid any one to bear arms on Good Friday. Parsifal complies, and Gurnemanz now recognizes him, as well as the holy spear, at sight of which he breaks forth in joyous exclamations, heralding the King's release from his torments — for only then can his wounds be closed when they are touched by the "guileless fool" with the same spear that inflicted them. Gurnemanz relates how, since Parsifal's departure, the knights have been deprived of the blessing of the Grail, since the King refused to uncover it — hoping thus to starve out his life even as Titurel's was extinguished after long privation. Parsifal, who considers himself guilty for not having found the Grail sooner, is so moved by this revelation that he almost faints. Kundry hastens for a basin of water. She washes his feet, pours oil on them from a golden flask, and dries them with her long dark tresses. Then Gurnemanz pours the oil on his head, and anoints him as King; whereupon Parsifal fulfils his first duty by baptizing

Kundry. He now desires to be led to Amfortas; Gurnemanz has told him that on that day the Grail once more was to be unveiled. The scene changes back to the hall of the Grailsburg. Two processions of knights again appear, one with Amfortas on his litter, the other with Titurel's bier, accompanied by the strains of a majestic funeral march. Amfortas refuses to perform his task — to be once more brought back to painful life from the brink of death. He tears open his bandages and begs his companions to kill him, when Parsifal appears and touches the wound with his healing spear, the point of which glows blood-red. He then takes the Grail in his hand, while a halo of light is shed over all. A dove descends and hovers over his head. Kundry sinks slowly to the ground, lifeless; Amfortas and Gurnemanz do homage on their knees to Parsifal, while the voices in the cupola almost inaudibly chant the miracle of redemption.

POETIC, PICTORIAL, AND MUSICAL FEATURES

Parsifal again opens a new phase of Wagner's art. *Lohengrin* is a romantic opera, *Tristan* a music-drama, or "action"; the *Nibelung's Ring* was entitled a "stage-festival-play," while *Parsifal* was baptized as a "stage-consecrating-festival-play" (*Bühnenweihfestspiel*). The title explains itself: while the music-drama had driven unæsthetic absurdities from the opera, *Parsifal* consecrates the theatre, and converts it into a Temple of Art. Rubinstein's idea of a sacred opera, or an oratorio with action and scenery, is here realized with a grandeur which he himself was very far from attaining in his *Tower of Babel* and *Paradise Lost*. Of course Wagner did not get

his idea from Rubinstein. His *Jesus of Nazareth* scheme[1] dates back as far as 1848, and this scheme became the poetic nucleus of *Parsifal*. In it we find especially emphasized the eagerness of Magdalena (Kundry) to serve, by way of atoning for her sins. The scene of the foot-washing also occurs in this sketch. By transferring these biblical scenes to the mystic regions of mythology, he made them available for theatric purposes. Even thus, there were critics at Bayreuth who denounced them as "blasphemous"; but the vast majority took a more liberal and reasonable view. The London *Athenæum* put the matter in a nutshell when it said that—

"nobody finds any impropriety in looking at a painting of the Last Supper, nor in listening to the words of Christ as set to music by Bach in his *Passion according to St. Matthew*. Wagner has in the first act of *Parsifal* combined the two arts." "So deeply reverent was the spirit of all the performers, that the remark was made by many who were present that the scene was the most impressive religious service they had ever attended." "None of the many thousands who have attended the Passion Play need fear any violence being done to their religious feelings by the performances of *Parsifal*."[2]

Besides the projected *Jesus of Nazareth* drama, there were various epic and legendary sources from which the

[1] Published in a small volume by Breitkopf and Härtel. See Vol. I. page 227.

[2] Similar sentiments were expressed by the London *Times*, *Academy*, *Saturday Review* (which spoke of the Liebesmahl scene as "most reverent and earnestly impressive"), and other papers. Nevertheless, all these papers agreed that *Parsifal* could not be produced on the London stage. English logic in this matter is very peculiar. On the concert or oratorio stage biblical personages may appear in dress-coat and kid-gloves to sing those love-songs which Handel transferred from his worldly operas to his oratorios; but they may not appear on the dramatic stage to enact a play to which at Bayreuth the devout and the agnostic alike rendered homage.

poet of *Parsifal* borrowed incidents and suggestions; foremost among them being Wolfram von Eschenbach's famous epic.[1] One very interesting source has been usually overlooked; namely, Bournouf's *Introduction à l'histoire du Buddhisme Indien*, which contains (183–187) a Buddhist tale that suggested to Wagner, in 1856, the plan of a drama to be entitled *Der Sieger* (The Victor). In the letters to Liszt of that year there are two references to this project, in one of which (July 20) he promises his friend that after digesting *Tristan*, he would perhaps receive a communication regarding *Der Sieger*, "the idea of which I have indeed carried about me for a long time, while the material for its embodiment has just now come upon me like a flash of lightning, perfectly clear to myself, but not yet sufficiently so for communication." On May 20 he had written down a rough sketch,[2] in which Chakya-Muni, Ananda, and Prakriti occur as characters. Chakya-Muni becomes a Buddha by being like Parsifal, "through pity enlightened." Moreover, when we find in these tales of old India the incident of the spear thrown by Mara (Klingsor) remaining

[1] For detailed comparisons see Muncker, 120; Hueffer, 110; *Bayreuther Blätter*, 1891, No. 1. On the legend of the Grail there are half a dozen books in German alone. Thematic guides to the *Parsifal* score have been written by Wolzogen (tenth edition, 1892), Heintz, Eichberg, and Kobbé. The most complete and valuable treatise on *Parsifal* is that by Kufferath, which considers the legendary sources, the poem, and the music from all points of view. The Rev. H. R. Haweis has an eloquent chapter on *Parsifal* in his *Musical Memories*. But the most fascinating account for lay readers is that written by Mr. Charles Dudley Warner (*Atlantic Monthly*, January, 1883, reprinted in *A Roundabout Journey*); this article is also valuable as showing what a profound impression Wagner's art-work is capable of producing on a mind of the highest type that yet claims no special knowledge of music.

[2] Reprinted in the posthumous *Entwürfe, Fragmente*, etc., pp. 97, 98.

suspended in the air, as well as the bevy of beautiful decoy maidens, we are led to the conclusion that some of the incidents intended for the *Sieger* drama were incorporated in *Parsifal.*

The mental alchemy known as genius enabled Wagner to fuse these diverse Christian and Buddhist elements into a drama, from which all epic and superfluous matter is eliminated, while the action, concentrated and concatenated, is given theatric prominence, and the characters are deepened into problems for psychologic analysis. Extensive as the *Parsifal* literature is already, many more essays and pamphlets will be written about the strange characters brought together in this drama. The only one of them that seems to belong to the everyday world is Gurnemanz, the genial and lovable old knight, who wins every one's heart by his actions, words, and flowing, cordial song. The unhappy Amfortas, a modern Philoctetes, appeals to our pity, even as the wounded Tristan. Klingsor is an utterly unoperatic character, such as only the flull-fledged music-drama could nurture. His song and its accompaniment is savage and dissonant like his character — to the annoyance of those who seek only sweetmeats in music, to the delight of the true æsthetic epicure, who believes that angry sentiments should be expressed in angry tones, in the music-drama as well as in the literary drama. Absolutely inconceivable in a "prima-donna opera" is Kundry, the only female character in the drama. Only in the second act is she allowed to affect beautiful song; in the first there is little but abrupt declamation and interjection, while in the third she is condemned to complete silence, a few inarticulate sounds excepted. Yet when impersonated

by a skilled actress, like Materna, Brandt, or Malten, how effective this rôle is, with its strange psychic transformations from the bearer of a personal curse, to the submissive servant of the Grail, and again to the lovely, alluring slave of Klingsor. How much more eloquent her silence in the last act, than an *aria di bravura* would be — unless we came to the theatre for music alone, in which case we should have gone to the concert-hall.[1] The author of *Hollenbreughel als Erzieher*, which made such a sensation in Germany a few years ago, has advanced[2] an ingenious theory of accounting for Kundry's subjection to Klingsor's will, and her hysterical actions in general, by making her a victim of *hypnotism*, or mesmerism, as practised by the fakirs of India and by modern physiologists alike. Looked at in this light, what is more scientific and modern than myth? The hypnotic theory fits Kundry marvellously in every detail.

The hero of this tragedy partakes of the characteristics of Lohengrin and Siegfried. His mission is to alleviate distress, to bring redemption. Reared in a lonely forest, ignorant of the world, he has Siegfried's naïveté, as well as that hero's dauntless courage, as evinced in the con-

[1] An ideal Kundry is difficult to find, *i.e.* one who combines the beauty called for in the second act with the histrionic talent required in the first and second acts. In case of doubt, it is better to sacrifice the beauty; at least Wagner seemed to think so. When he invited Frl. Brandt to be one of the Kundrys, she was delighted, but expressed doubts of her fitness, on account of the directions, "Kundry, a young woman of the greatest beauty." "Never mind the beauty," interrupted the Meister: "I need a clever actress, and that you are; cosmetic will make up the rest."

[2] *Bayreuther Fanfaren*, von Ferdinand Pfohl, an excellent brochure on the later Bayreuth festivals, with many admirable remarks on *Parsifal*, *Tristan*, and *Meistersinger*. Every collector of Wagner books should have this one.

test with the knights in Klingsor's garden. His "tragic guilt" lies in his ignorance of compassion, of pity, the highest of all moral attributes. He first shows his lack of pity by wantonly killing the sacred swan; he shows it again by remaining an unmoved spectator of the wounded King's distress. The psychic climax of the tragedy lies in the moment when Pity first enlightens his soul — when Kundry's long kiss makes him clairvoyant, and the voluptuous feeling is suddenly changed to a pang of bitter pain as the King's fate and suffering dawn on him through his new-born sense of compassion.

In making this change in Parsifal's character spring from the suddenly acquired sense of pity, Wagner follows Schopenhauer, who declares[1] that "pity alone is the true basis of all *free* justice and all *genuine* humanity. Only in so far as an action springs from it has it a moral value." It is ridiculous, however, to say, for this reason, as some of the commentators have done, that *Parsifal*[2] is "Schopenhauer set to music." Pity — for men and animals — is the basis of Buddhistic ethics, and is not entirely unknown in Christian ethics. Schopenhauer's part in this matter was simply this, that he emphasized the importance of Pity, especially also as including animals. Wagner was too good a dramatist to set Scho-

[1] *Grundlage der Moral*, p. 208.

[2] There has been a great deal of superfluous and pedantic discussion as to the etymology of "Parsifal." Wagner followed Görres in deriving the word from the Arabic *Parsi Fal*, the pure fool. W. Hertz objected that there is no Arabic word *Fal* meaning fool. Eichberg points out that in the Cornish language *par* means fellow, and *fall* simple-minded. But whether Arabic, Cornish, Chinese, or Volapük, what difference does it make? *Parsifal* is a dramatic poem, not a philological essay, and a dramatic poet is not bound by the laws of etymology; he may give Bohemia a sea-coast if he chooses.

penhauer or any other philosopher to music. There is a philosophic background to his dramas, but that is a matter for private study of the poem, and does not obtrude itself on the stage.

To the vast majority of spectators, *Parsifal* appeals primarily or solely as a pictorial drama with music, and as such it has few equals. The structure of the plot is exceedingly ingenious, betraying in every detail the master hand which had gained its cunning by life-long theatric practice. The tableaux are among the most beautiful ever conceived by human imagination: the opening scene, Gurnemanz and his esquires asleep under the spreading tree; the procession with the wounded King on a litter; the group over the expiring swan; the marvellous transformation scene, where, as Parsifal and Gurnemanz appear to be walking, the forest gradually disappears, a cave opens in rocky cliffs, and conceals them for a moment, whereupon they appear as if going up a slope until, amid the peals of bells, they enter the mighty hall, with light streaming in from the vaulted dome; in the second act, the gruesome scene in Klingsor's tower, forming a striking contrast to the lovely groupings of the flower-maidens which follow; the spear suspended over Parsifal's head; the startling collapse and change from the gaudy flower-garden to the bare stage with bleak mountains in the background; in the third act the flower-meadow; Parsifal's return; the foot-washing and baptism; and, to crown all, the final tableau — the knights in red and blue robes seated at two semi-circular tables bowing reverently as their new King Parsifal uncovers the crystal cup, and gently swings it about, while a blinding ray of light shoots down and

makes it grow with increasing crimson lustre, and the dove descends and hovers over his head, — all these scenes are the emanations of superlative pictorial genius. The German commentator who exclaimed that the possibility of such scenes presupposed the entire development of the Christian art of painting, may have been carried off his feet by his enthusiasm; but it is certain that the scenes mentioned, if fixed by instantaneous photography, and engraved, would make pictures of which Leonardo, Raphael, and Makart might be proud.[1] The vivid conciseness with which these scenes are sketched in the poem is truly admirable.

To one of the scenes objection was made by many impartial judges, namely, to the monstrous size and gaudy colors of the tropical flowers in the second act. Yet Wagner had his reason for letting the artist Joukowsky design this scene as it was. He says (X. 390) in regard to the costumes, that

"they had to be devised in harmony with Klingsor's magic garden, and we had to make many experiments before we were satisfied that we had decided upon the correct pattern for a floral phenomenon not to be found in actual life — maidens that seemed to have naturally sprung from these wizard-flowers."

[1] The scenic problems offered in Wagner's dramas, notably in *Parsifal*, were hard nuts for the carpenters and machinists to crack, and mark a new era in their art. The (apparent) walk through the changing scenic panorama was an absolutely novel effect and problem, while the sudden change from flower-garden to desert is even more startling than that from the grotto of Venus to the Wartburg valley in *Tannhäuser*. Some of these scenic features call for the latest scientific appliances; the gradual glowing of the cup, for instance, which is effected by means of two fine wires attached to the cup (invisible to the spectator), converting the Grail into an incandescent electric lamp. The floating spear is attached to a wire by rings and thin threads which easily snap when Parsifal seizes the weapon.

To which I may add that the optical illusion resulting from the enormous size and the bright colors of these "Spanish" flowers was such that the buxom German flower-maidens seemed transformed into petite Andalusian damsels, and gave a fairy-like, mythical aspect to the whole scene such as we should expect in a sorcerer's garden. The tropical size and luxuriance of the flowers also intensified the contrast with the bleak desert into which the garden is suddenly transformed when Parsifal swings his sacred spear, and breaks the spell of Klingsor's power; and a third reason for the size of the flowers is given in this stage direction: "The girls lie scattered on the ground like withered flowers."

Never, surely, has a dramatist sketched scenes and incidents which more urgently invoked the coöperation of music than these. Only a musician could have written this poem, only a poet set it to music. In one respect, at least, *Parsifal* is the most perfect of Wagner's music-dramas. With the exception of the Good Friday spell and the chorus of flower-girls there is hardly a page which can be transferred to the concert-hall without excessive detriment, and even those two scenes lose half their charm if severed from their stage surroundings, and from the music which precedes and follows them. From the concert-giver's point of view this will seem a shortcoming; but *Parsifal* was not written for concert-givers. As Dr. Riemann has remarked,

"Wagner's music is not intended to be effective by itself, but only in connection with the poem and scenery. He dispenses with cheap musical effects in favor of a harmonious structure of the dramatico-musical art-work. He who fails to see the grandeur of this idea is beyond help."

An excellent illustration, showing how marvellously the dramatic action and scene heighten the power of music, may be found in the moment when Klingsor hurls his spear at *Parsifal*. As it flies through the air, the orchestra is hushed, excepting the harps, which play a rapid *glissando* run up through three octaves. In the concert-hall this would seem an ordinary trick of virtuosity, whereas in the drama every one is thrilled by the appropriateness of this simple musical accompaniment of the flying spear.

Parsifal has three orchestral preludes,— three of those admirable mood-pictures which are intended to put the hearer in the proper frame of mind for the coming events, and are therefore as much out of place in the concert-hall as those parts where the orchestra is associated with the dramatic vocalism. The prelude to the first act gives us a foretaste of the solemn and ecstatic emotions inspired by the Grail, and of the sorrows of the sinful Amfortas. Love, Faith, and Hope are its themes,[1] and it is built up principally of the Holy Supper, the Grail, and the Faith motives, which recur so often in course of the drama.

Of the numerous passages in the first act which invite discussion, only a few can be referred to here; and as the testimony of an entire or partial convert has often more force than the eulogy of a champion, let us see what Ehlert has to say about one of these — Gurnemanz's long monologue, in which we get the exposition of the drama. Ehlert denies that this scene is too long, as some had said: —

"How perfectly these seemingly innumerable instruments describe the case, just as in a parliamentary debate where each mem-

[1] See Wagner's own analysis of this prelude in *Entwürfe*, etc., pp. 106, 107.

ber speaks from his own seat! How well these motives, especially Klingsor's wizard-motive, phonograph the subject, so to say, *until one seems to be listening, not to tones, but to distinct words.*[1] This may be long, but it is not long-spun."

One of the most touching episodes in this act is the commotion following the shooting of the swan. While one of the young knights draws the arrow from the dying bird's breast, Gurnemanz bitterly reproaches Parsifal: —

"Unheard-of deed! How could you murder him — here in the sacred forest, where peace and pity should prevail? Did not the animals of the grove approach and greet you confidingly? Did not the birds sing to you from the branches? What grudge had you against the poor swan? He was only seeking his mate, circling over the lake, which thus he consecrated for the King's bath. This did not move you, but only aroused the childish desire to kill? The swan was dear to us: what is he now to you? Here — look and see where you hit him; see the white plumes stained by the dark blood; see his wings collapsed; the broken glance — do you see that eye? Are you now conscious of your sin? Say, boy, do you understand your guilt? How could you incur it?"

I am convinced that many a thoughtless hunter of harmless animals, could he read this poem, which even in a prose translation is so affecting, would, like Parsifal, break his bow and cast his arrows from him. In that "broken glance" we have again a reminiscence of the one animal that Wagner killed as a youth. We hear, also, in the orchestra, a musical reminiscence of the *Lohengrin* swan-harmonies, sad and broken. There is nothing in all dramatic literature more realistic, more pitiable and pathetic, than this swan scene in *Parsifal*.

[1] The line which I have italicized indicates that Ehlert had suddenly seen a great light regarding the dramatic value of Leading Motives. It is never too late to learn. It was on account of this definite orchestral and emotional eloquence that Wagner made use of Leading Motives.

Another emotional climax in this act is the panoramic change of scenery, with its swelling waves of orchestral sound, in which various motives of reminiscence and anticipation are stirringly interwoven; so stirringly that even the hostile pen of Ludwig Speidel was impelled to write that, "on hearing this music, one is vividly impressed by the feeling that something momentous must be happening in the world."[1]

Of the religious sublimity of the closing scene of this act and of the last, printer's ink can convey no shadow of an idea. The solemn pealing of the bells, the devout chant of the knights, taken up by an invisible chorus of youths half-way up the cupola, and finally by boys' voices at the extreme height of the cupola; then the unveiling and glowing of the Grail amid a halo of exquisite orchestral harmonies, — all this cannot be described.[2] It is of interest to note that in the three-storied arrangement of

[1] Future writers of music-dramas, if convicted of blundering, will perhaps derive consolation from the fact that the greatest stage-manager the world has ever seen made a miscalculation in his last and most mature work. The panoramic music in the first act was found too short, and repeats had to be introduced. In the third act the music was left as it was, but the shifting scene was omitted. One of the things that occupied Wagner's mind in the last months of his life was the preparation of a new and correct setting for this scene. There were other things in *Parsifal* in the nature of experiments. Titurel was left silent in the last act; the color of the knights' costume was long in doubt, blue and red being finally decided upon. The tricots worn by the flower-girls showed their toes, which shocked a Berlin critic, who confessed he had never before seen a female foot, and that he was disappointed in his expectations! No doubt Wagner blundered in not importing Andalusian flower-girls, as called for by the plot!

[2] The bells, unfortunately, were a failure at the first *Parsifal* Festival. Their sound was to be produced by a kind of specially constructed hammer-clavier. At later Festivals a great improvement was effected by combining the sounds of tam-tams with piano-strings, consisting each of six of the strongest strings twisted together; but absolute illusion has not yet been reached in this respect.

the chorus, Wagner reverted to an idea which, as we saw in a previous chapter, he employed at a performance of his early choral work, *The Love Feast of the Apostles*.

"Two solemn services of the Roman Catholic Church with an Alhambra ballet separating one from the other," is the definition of *Parsifal* given by a flippant English journalist. Paul Lindau more poetically compares this *mélange* of piety with sensuality to a mingling of incense with the perfume of roses. But even within the second act itself the dramatic contrasts have the vividness which Wagner alone had at his command: the agitated prelude leading to the gruesome wizard-discords and the hypnotization of the hysterical Kundry, followed by the seductive sensualism of the flower-garden flirtation. This decoy song of the flower-maidens — is there anything in music to equal its sensuous charm? It is as fresh and spontaneous as the seductive chorus of the sirens in *Tannhäuser*, and that of the Rhine-maidens in the first and last of the *Nibelung* dramas; it is at the same time a marvel of musical construction. Soloists singing alone, soloists in groups of three, two choruses in three-part harmony, alternate in assailing the guileless Parsifal, first with reproaches for killing their knightly sweethearts, then, as his attitude dispels their fears, all striving in turn to win his favor for their personal charms by blandishing words and caresses. Their song, when they have disappeared in groups, and returned attired as flowers, has a most insinuating grace, suffused with an intoxicating orchestral fragrance. And the most remarkable thing about this Oriental scene of enticement is that there is not a trace of vulgarity or sensualism in the luring flattery of the flower-maidens; we are in Fairy-

land, and Klingsor's houris are but animated flowers whose love-making is as innocent as the flirtations of butterflies with roses.[1]

After this bit of Oriental polygamous flirtation, the temptress Kundry has no easy task to convince Parsifal and the spectators of her superior charms. The spectators may be persuaded, — for there is some ravishing music in this scene, up to the moment of the long kiss, — but Parsifal does not even succumb to the artful stratagem with which Kundry attempts to win his heart, by offering him the dangerous kiss of love in the guise of his mother's dying kiss, to be delivered by her lips. It is a subtle touch of amorous psychology, a dramatic masterstroke.

The exquisite prelude to the third act depicts Parsifal's long, despairing search for the Grailsburg imposed on him by Kundry's curse. Desolation and despair constitute the prevailing mood, with brief reminiscences of the curse and the maidens' reproach, and a prophetic allusion to Titurel's funeral music. This prelude is a marvel of delicate, refined orchestration, and of vivid mood-painting. When Parsifal at last has found the Grail and appears before Gurnemanz, the aged knight does not at once know him, disguised as he is in his

[1] See Wagner's own remarks (X. 384–5) on the "childish naïveté" of this scene, "far removed from any suggestion of sensuality"; and secured, partly, by "eliminating the passionate accents which usually break through all the melodic lines," in favor of grace and euphony. "I do not believe," he adds with pardonable pride, "that any other stage has ever shown such a bewitching exhibition of maidenly grace in song and action as our artistic friends provided in this scene." He took great delight in this episode, for which he had secured six prima donnas, with a special chorus-master, H. Porges, known thenceforth as "Blumenvater."

helmet; but the spectator knows him, for he recognizes the accompanying Parsifal motive, even though it also is disguised in minor and in a mysterious color suggesting the Nibelung's Tarnhelmet. The rest of this scene is a delicious stream of uninterrupted orchestral and vocal melody: Parsifal's anointment, with Gurnemanz's devout blessing; the tender redemption of Kundry; and, above all, the fragrant flower-meadow music, the "Good Friday Spell," which has even invaded the concert-halls. The poetic idea underlying this episode is as beautiful as the music. Parsifal, after he has baptized Kundry, exclaims, "How fair the meadow seems to-day!" and Gurnemanz explains why, on this day, nature smiles instead of sorrowing: the tears of repentant sinners have besprinkled the fields with holy dew, whereat all created beings rejoice.

Pealing of bells is heard again; Gurnemanz takes Parsifal once more to the great hall. Funeral strains of tragic grief issue from the orchestra as the knights are bringing in the bier with Titurel's lifeless body, while another group bears Amfortas and the Grail.[1] The Death March of Titurel has in it more of the wail of lament than Siegfried's Death March, in which the heroic reminiscent strains almost overpower the lament; and the solemn peal of the Grailsburg bells deepens its melancholy. The responsive choruses of the knights — the

[1] Here, as Mr. Charles Dudley Warner has finely remarked, "the effects of color and grouping are marvellous; and to eyes familiar with sacred paintings of the masters, almost every figure and dress is a reminiscence of some dear association. The angelic loveliness of the bearers of the shrine, however, *surpasses any picture, as much as life transcends any counterfeit of it.*" Was Wagner right, after all, in saying that the music-drama will some day supersede the pictorial plastic arts?

question "whom bear ye on yon gloomy bier?" with the answer from the other group that it is Titurel, the former King, have a quaint, antique solemnity that suggests Æschylus.[1] Nor is there in Æschylus or other poet anything more terrible, more awe-inspiring, than the urgent, threatening demand, "Thou must! Thou must!" with which the knights crowd around the unwilling Amfortas, and insist that he shall uncover the Grail.

Nothing in *Parsifal* is more remarkable than the prominence of the chorus, and the variety of forms it assumes. I explained in the chapter on *Die Meistersinger* how, in that drama, Wagner recovered from his excessive prejudice against the use of the chorus in a music-drama and atoned for his omissions in the Trilogy by writing such stirring choral strains as had never before been heard on the stage — choruses of varied form, including ecclesiastic chorals; merry songs of gambolling apprentices; a riot set to music; humorous songs of trade-guilds; and the sublime outpourings of the assembled populace. In *Parsifal* this choral variety is still further extended; here we have the angelic strains of boys' voices from the cupola, suggesting in their melodic and harmonic simplicity and purity the seventeenth century music of Palestrina; the devotional chant of the knights at the Holy Supper; the responsive and threatening choruses just referred to; and, most wonderful and novel of all, the flower-

[1] Mr. Seidl called my attention to the extremely interesting fact that it was originally Wagner's intention to introduce these responsive choruses in *Götterdämmerung*, just before Siegfried's body is borne to the funeral pyre. (See the original form of that drama, *Siegfried's Tod*, II. 299: "Wer ist der Held den ihr erhebt," etc.) He showed his usual dramatic insight by omitting them there and introducing them, *mutatis mutandis*, in *Parsifal*.

maidens' choruses, in which Wagner has shown once more his astounding originality. In this Flower Girl scene we have the operatic chorus of the future, in which, while the beauty of ensemble song is retained, we realize at the same time Wagner's ideal that there should be no word-repetitions, no confusing of the text-words, and that every member of the chorus should be an individual actor. There is food here for hours of thought.

The fact that several of the poetic (and consequently also the musical) features of *Parsifal* date back to an earlier period of its composer's life, makes it difficult to answer definitely the question whether his creative power retained its freshness and vigor up to his last years. Certain it is that most of the *Parsifal* motives equal, in their definite emotional suggestiveness and originality, those of his former dramas; certain it is, too, that in this score he still further enriched the mysterious science and art of harmony and modulation with new combinations which deeply stir the emotions; certain, again, that nowhere has he better shown his amazing skill in developing, combining, and interweaving motives, and in coloring them with orchestral tints such as no other composer has ever had on his palette. In the final scene of *Parsifal* — the last pages of music he penned — it seems as if all these colors were to be surpassed in saturated vividness. Only the deep celestial blue of the Mediterranean, of the Spanish sky, can give an idea of these ethereal orchestral splendors.

Generations will pass before the musical public will realize what a wealth of musical material is stored in this score. Its dramatic grandeur and pictorial beauties impress all spectators at once, but the music needs

repeated hearing before all its marvels are revealed. A Berlin critic aptly compared this music to that Raphael Madonna, "which appears to us at first glance to have a background of clouds; but if we look more closely the clouds are resolved into the heads of angels."[1]

PARSIFAL CRITICS

The future writer of a comic history of music will have less of a harvest in the *Parsifal* than in the *Nibelung* criticisms, although the field is almost as large. A few grains, however, are worth gleaning. Ten days before the first performance at Bayreuth, Franz Hille of Vienna wrote an article on "Richard Wagner — No Musician." Another expert, named Schrattenholtz, who had wisely waited until he had heard *Parsifal*, found *Parsifal* "a desert with a few oases," while the sounds uttered by Kundry in the scene where Klingsor hypnotizes her, "might be permissible in a dog subjected to vivisection, but in an artist they are simply ridiculous." On Alfred von Mensi the *Parsifal* motives suggested "piano-tuning with impediments." The same critic was one of two who made the brilliant discovery that the *Parsifal* poem was full of the usual crude and clumsy alliterative effects, whereas, in truth, there is in this

[1] It is to be feared that when *Parsifal* makes its way to the commercial opera-houses, much of this beautiful music will have to be sacrificed; for although in the number of bars (4347) it is Wagner's shortest score, except *Rheingold* (which has 3905 bars, while the *Dutchman* has 4432, according to a writer in the London *Musical Times* of Nov. 1, 1883), most of the music is so solemn and slow that more time is consumed than usually. The first act alone lasts an hour and three-quarters; but I have never yet met any one at Bayreuth who found it too long.

whole poem only *one* alliterative verse: "Ihr nährt sie nicht, sie naht euch nie."[1] Max Kalbeck pronounced Wagner a

"talent without genuine originality of invention. . . . Not a great artist, but a clubsmith (*Vereinsmeier*), puff-hero, intrigue-forger, scandal-maker, and sectarian." Another Max, surnamed Schönau, opined that in *Parsifal* Wagner has "once more proven that in musical endowment he surpasses all living composers about as much as he himself is surpassed by Mozart"!

The well-known art-critic Wilhelm Lübke appears to have had an awful experience at Bayreuth. Here are a few of the things he discovered in *Parsifal:*—

"The destruction of all healthy art-principles"; "musical invention at a lower level"; "an endless desert of discouraging psalmodic recitatives"; "an absolute negation of the dramatic"; "a complete absence of melodic charm"; Parsifal himself is "an impotent pray-brother"; the whole drama is calculated "for hysterical women and *blasé* men of the world"; the festival itself must be characterized as "art dragged down to the level of commercial puffery"; "What would Lessing and Herder, Goethe and Schiller, say if they saw their countrymen threatened by such intellectual obscuration? What would they say . . . to the attempt to dish up the obsolete symbols of mediæval mysticism as objects of veneration?"

No wonder that Lübke felt inclined to propose Wagner as a "Doctor of Cacophony." He forgot only one thing: the wisdom of a certain old proverb relating to a cobbler and his last.

Mr. Joseph Bennett, in his letters to the London *Telegraph,* notes gleefully that before the second performance,

[1] Tappert, *Für und wider Parsifal.* Berlin, 1882. T. Barth. P. 22. See also p. 14 for an amusing list of pet names bestowed on the Wagnerites by the "critics."

"an obliging clerk made various graceful curves with his pencil upon the plan, and intimated that all seats within their cope were at my disposal." This, surely, was something to rejoice over, all the more as Mr. Bennett found the subject "painful indeed," and the "patchy, disjointed, flighty music . . . singularly wearisome and unsatisfactory"; moreover, he felt quite certain that the English people, "at any rate, will never admit *Parsifal* among them."

So the English Archphilistine does not disappoint us even on this last occasion, but when the comic historian of music looks among his German colleagues who were formerly so "amoosin'," he will be doomed to a large measure of disappointment. Even Speidel, Ehlert, Lindau, and Hanslick were not what they should have been; they distinctly disappointed their admirers. Speidel made one more despairing effort to be witty by calling Wagner a "Wahnfriedrich"; then he utterly collapsed into the confession that "since the first performance of *Lohengrin*, we have not been in a position to bestow praise on Wagner. To-day circumstances compel us to oppose appreciation to the hard word of condemnation." In other words, the great Ludwig Speidel, reputed one of the leading German critics of the nineteenth century, tells us that he found nothing whatever to praise in *Rheingold*, *Walküre*, *Siegfried*, *Götterdämmerung*, *Tristan*, and *Meistersinger!* Thus we see the miraculous even in Wagner's enemies: as their conscious wit fails them, they become witty unwittingly.

One of the most melancholy episodes in the history of Wagnerism is the misunderstanding between Dr. Paul Lindau and Dr. Eduard Hanslick on the subject of *Par-*

sifal. Lindau is not quite reconciled to the Leading Motives, and he even tells us that "the hatred of melody has taken root more and more deeply in Wagner"; but he modestly qualifies this by speaking of melody "as commonly understood" (*i.e.* vocal dance rhythms). He also condemns his own procedure on former occasions by remarking that "all Wagner's poems improve on closer acquaintance, and it would be presumptuous to express a final opinion after a single hearing." He pronounces *Parsifal* one of the most beautiful dramatic productions in existence, and compares the tableaux to Perugino's; for the music, too, he has little but praise.

No wonder that Dr. Hanslick, in his review of the "Parsifal Literature," found his friend Lindau disappointing. His letters on *Parsifal*, he complains, are inferior to the *Sober Letters* on the first Bayreuth Festival, in which he "told Wagner the bitterest truths about his Tetralogy. . . . In the *Parsifal* letters, we miss the same irresistible spirit of laughter and derision." Indeed, Hanslick is mean enough to intimate that possibly Lindau's sources of wit had dried up, because he did not make clownish fun of *Parsifal!* The most unkindest cut of all, on Lindau's part, was that whereas Hanslick had found the "diseased kernel" of the drama in the fact that Wagner, at the critical point, deviates from the old legend,[1] Lindau, a famous dramatist himself, finds in this very fact Wagner's dramatic masterstroke, "which renders the conflict more profound."

And yet — what right has Hanslick to throw stones at Lindau when he himself — Professor Dr. Eduard Hans-

[1] Which makes Parsifal's guilt lie in his not asking Amfortas the cause of his suffering.

lick — wrote such rank heresies as the following, *à propos* of *Parsifal*?

"Just as that Babylonian ruler had his name burnt on every brick that helped to form great architectural works, to bear witness after thousands of years, so the author of *Parsifal* has impressed an invisible R. W., as it were, on every bar. With perfect certainty, scholars will, in future times, recognize every page of this score as his."

"In all of Wagner's operas the music has succeeded in toning down the defects of the poem, and in adding to the beauty of its good points."

"*Parsifal* is scored in a surprisingly discreet manner. In the art of orchestration Wagner has not grown old; in *Parsifal* this art has developed into pure magic, and for every change of mood conjures the most wonderful sounds in infinite shades and variety."

As regards the creative power in general: —

"For a man of Wagner's age [sixty-nine], and with his system, it seems to me in *Parsifal* to continue to be astounding. Any one who can write pieces of the enchanting melodious charm of the flower-girl scene, and of the energy of the final scene in *Parsifal*, still has control of a power which his youngest contemporaries may envy him."

Does it not seem as if Hanslick's complaint of Lindau's heresy were a case of the pot calling the kettle black?

THE FIRST PERFORMANCE

On the evening before the first performance of *Parsifal*, there was a banquet at the restaurant near the theatre, at which all the artists were present. In course of the evening Wagner delivered an address in which he spoke in terms of gratitude of the friends who had generously assisted him, especially of his royal patron, without

whose aid this second Festival too would have been impossible; he concluded with a toast to Liszt, whom he declared identical with himself — "Franz Liszt ist mit mir eins." After the banquet, when he was about to leave, and had already donned his paletot, he faced about, hat in hand, to deliver a few further remarks, ending with the exclamation: "May all the actors be possessed by the devil, and those in the auditorium at least receive him. If you do not all become crazy, our object will not have been attained."

The first representation, on July 26, was more perfect than that of any of the *Nibelung* dramas had been in 1876. The cast included Materna, Winkelmann, Reichmann, Scaria, Hill, and Kindermann, in the rôles of Kundry, Parsifal, Amfortas, Gurnemanz, Klingsor, and Titurel respectively. All of these were excellent, both as singers and as actors. Scaria, in particular, distinguished himself by revealing, with almost unprecedented art, the marvellous beauty of Wagnerian song, combining a mellow, sonorous tone-production with an absolute distinctness of articulation, not a word being lost or mumbled. It was ideal dramatic singing, a new style of vocal utterance brought to perfection for the first time. On this topic, and on the various scenic and other experiments that had to be made before everything was satisfactory, Wagner himself discourses eloquently and suggestively in his reminiscences of the *Parsifal* Festival (X. 383–395), from which I will quote only one passage: —

"Experienced theatrical managers asked me what was the secret of the government which secured such astonishing results in the precision of all scenic, musical and dramatic details on,

over, under, and behind the stage; upon which I retorted good-humoredly that this was accomplished through anarchy, every one doing what he wished, namely, the right thing. Certainly this was true: every one understood the whole of the object aimed at. No one fancied himself called on to do too much or too little. Every one cared more for the success of the whole than for personal applause, to receive which from the public in the customary manner was looked on as a disturbance, while the interest manifested by the constant arrival of new audiences rejoiced us as evidence of the correctness of our belief in the worth of our efforts."

This last sentence vaguely hints at a slightly unpleasant incident which occurred at the first performance of *Parsifal*. It was understood by Wagner's admirers, who made up the greater part of the audience, that he was averse to applause while the curtain was up. On this occasion, in view of the semi-religious character of the drama, it was his desire that there should be no applause at all, or at least no attempt to call the actors or composer on the stage before the end of the last act, in order that the dramatic illusion might be kept up to the last moment. The artists most willingly agreed to this, as to everything desired by the Meister; but the public did not quite understand the situation. The ecclesiastic solemnity of the close of the first act did not invite to any noisy demonstrations; but when, after the second act, the applause became "operatic" in character, and the calls for the composer and the artists continued, Wagner finally appeared, and in a tone of reproach begged the audience not to insist on seeing the artists; adding that such a form of approval was not called for on this occasion. The Wagnerian audience — as obedient to the Meister's wishes as the singers themselves — took this request literally, and when the last act was

over refrained from all applause. But this was not what Wagner had meant. He rose in his box and said: "Whether my friends are satisfied with me, I know not. But if they are as much satisfied with my artists as I am, then I beg them to follow my example, who am the first to applaud them." Whereupon a storm of applause arose; but the singers had already retired to their dressing-rooms, and did not appear before the curtain.

No sincere friend of art can deny that Wagner's intentions were of the noblest, and that the unpleasantness of this affair merely resulted from an awkward misunderstanding. The critical Philistines, however, who had succeeded in getting seats, proceeded, with their usual extraordinary hatred of genius, to make this incident the basis of one of their regular malicious tirades against Wagner's character, the special point of attack being again the *gaucherie* of his speeches to the public. Perhaps he took these aspersions to heart; at any rate, at the close of the last performance, the third act of which he conducted himself, he made an effusive speech of thanks to the artists, who had come on the stage, he himself being invisible to the audience, which he also ignored in his speech. This again aroused the ire of the Philistines: homilies appeared on the next day in Berlin and Vienna papers abusing Wagner for his "insulting way of ignoring the audience!"

The last performance but one had as its most enthusiastic spectator the Crown Prince of Prussia; while the last repetition was attended by the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, the Grand Duke of Weimar, Prince Gustav of Sachsen-Weimar, and the Prince and Princess Wladimir of Russia. European royalty had evidently quite

forgiven the former revolutionist. The audiences had increased toward the end, and on the last two days the house was almost filled; the consequence being that the fund of $35,000 collected for the *Parsifal* Festival not only remained intact, but the receipts covered the expenses, with a surplus of $1500, which sum was added to that fund. Under these circumstances, a repetition of the Festival in 1883 was decided upon, as a matter of course. The artists said farewell to their esteemed Master on the understanding that all were to meet again the following summer; but fate ordained otherwise: King Ludwig's two black swans were ominous of the mourning in store for them.[1]

[1] Not content with thanking his artists collectively, Wagner called on them individually to express his gratitude in words and by means of presents of photographs, vases, statues, etc., often with playful inscriptions. To Reichmann he said: "Na, you brilliant fellow, you shall have something unique," whereupon he put his hand in his pocket and pressed a golden ten-mark piece into the astonished singer's hand. There, my boy, is a ten-mark souvenir; Schnorr received only a thaler after the first *Tristan* night!" (Oesterlein, III. 178.)

THE LAST SEVEN MONTHS

IN THE VENDRAMIN PALACE

"To speak of the success of a new work by Wagner," says Dr. Riemann, "sounds to our modern notions almost like heresy; it is an event." *Parsifal* was an "event" in musical history, and would have been one even had it proved a financial failure; nevertheless it is a pleasure to record that it was a success pecuniarily as well as artistically. Yet it proved a dearly bought victory. There can be little doubt that had it not been for the labor and excitement of producing *Parsifal*, Wagner might have lived some years longer. Even in his younger days, the rehearsing of one of his works prostrated him completely. In 1882 he had almost reached his seventieth year, and the heart-trouble to which he succumbed a few months later had already made sad inroads on his vigor. He suffered much from palpitation and abdominal troubles, and had been afflicted, ever since 1879, by an occasional, although infrequent, fainting-fit. No time was therefore to be lost; he longed once more for the balmy air and autumnal sunshine of Italy. He left Bayreuth on Sept. 14; rumor said, with a physician as one of his companions, but this was not true. Fortunately, his means allowed him to travel in comfort, and safe from the annoyance caused by curiosity. Thanks

to the travelling Wagner Theatre and other sources, it is estimated that his income during the last year of his life was $25,000.[1] The party arrived in Munich on the fifteenth, in a private parlor-car, and forthwith continued the journey to Venice. At Bozen there was a narrow escape from an unpleasant detention; heavy rains had caused an inundation which interrupted railway travel. Fortunately, luck was no longer against Wagner, as always in former years: he was in the last train that succeeded in crossing into Italy.

Venice was reached on the sixteenth, and rooms engaged at the Hotel Europe. Wagner had a great aversion to hotel life, on account of the inevitable noises and publicity; but he had to content himself for a week, until the superb suite of twenty-eight rooms he had rented in the first story of the Palazzo Vendramin had been prepared for occupancy. This famous palace was built before the discovery of America (1481), and it has been ever since one of the sights of Venice which few tourists overlook. Its spaciousness, its architectural beauty, its historic associations, and romantic situation on the Grand Canal, appealed to the imagination of Wagner, who was in one of his happiest moods when he took possession of it, on a bright sunny day. Twenty-eight rooms may seem a large number, but there were plenty of occupants for them. Besides the composer and his wife, the household in the Vendramin comprised Siegfried and Eva Wagner (aged twelve and fourteen years), Daniela and

[1] I may state in this place that he asked of B. Schott's Sons $30,000 for the right of publishing *Parsifal*. As they had paid him the absurdly small sum of $10,000 for the four dramas of the *Nibelung's Ring*, he thus wanted to establish a more just average. He succeeded, however, in getting only $15,000 for *Parsifal*.

Isolde Bülow, Baron von Stein, the teachers of Eva and Siegfried, and four German servants. Room had also to be found for the Count Gravina and his wife Blandina (*née* Bülow), for Liszt, and for the painter Joukowsky, who were entertained as guests.

In this domestic circle Wagner spent the last twenty weeks of his life. Visitors were not desired, and if any called, Frau Cosima was usually the one to receive them. The love of solitude was, if possible, more pronounced than ever in her husband. He believed he should live to be ninety years old; yet he could not tell; any day might be his last, and his mind was still so full of projects that he felt his time was too valuable to be given up to social duties. While accepting no calls except from intimate friends, he rarely made any except on the Countess Hatzfeld, whose daughter, the Countess von Schleinitz had been for years one of his dearest friends, and a most influential patroness at the Prussian court. To husband his strength for his work, he led a most regular life. Rising before six o'clock, he devoted a few hours to writing, during which no one was allowed to enter, unless he called for a servant, who found him in such cases sitting with his face to the windows, bending over his work, with a glass of wine or cognac on the table. On chilly mornings — Italian palaces are not easily heated — he exchanged his satin smoking-gown for his fur cloak.

This isolation continued till about ten o'clock, — sometimes till twelve or one, — breakfast being served separately to him, as to the other members of the household. When the morning's work was done, Frau Cosima entered, to give him the day's news and inform him of the con-

tents of letters, suppressing whatever might annoy him, for the doctor had ordered that excitement must be avoided above all things. A good dinner, washed down with Rhine wine, was taken after the German fashion, in the middle of the day, at one or two, and was followed by an hour's nap in the bedroom facing the Palace garden, where the cries of the gondoliers, and the steam-whistle of the canal "tramway" could not be heard. The afternoon hours were devoted to recreation, and to walks in the city or excursions on the water. After the morning conference with his wife, he usually went down into the courtyard to ascertain the chances of good weather. He had a curious habit of lifting his hands, one after the other, and moving them about, as if to test the condition of the air. In case of doubt, the gondoliers were consulted as to the weather prospects. If the conditions were favorable, the gondola was ordered for 3.30. Wagner often expressed his preference for a gondola over a carriage, because of the absence of dust and noise. Sometimes the excursions were extended beyond the city canals, to Murano or the Lido, as he found that the fresh salt breezes from the ocean benefited his lungs. On such occasions he was usually seen comfortably extended, engaged in conversation with his wife and children, with vivid gesticulations, while their attentive attitude showed how they worshipped and loved him, and cherished every word that came from his lips.

In his walks in the city he was sometimes also accompanied by his family, but often he went alone as far as the Piazetta, where he sometimes sat an hour to rest and meditate; or else he called at his banker's, or at a confectioner's, or indulged in a glass of beer and a piece of

Swiss cheese, in defiance of the doctor's warnings; or called at his barber's to have him cut his hair, which continued to grow with youthful vigor. Sometimes the music in St. Mark's Place seemed to annoy him, and once, when a selection from *Lohengrin* was played, he was seen going into Lavennas, and stopping up his ears. On another occasion, he went up to the conductor and begged him to play something from Rossini's *Gazza Ladra*. The bandmaster did not know him, and expressed his regrets that he could not do so, as he had not the music with him; but hardly had Wagner turned his back when some one told him who the distinguished-looking stranger was. Whereupon a messenger was immediately despatched and the piece asked for played with special care and fire. Wagner was much pleased by this attention; he came to thank the musicians for their good-will and to compliment them on their performance.[1]

Sometimes an excursion was made along the narrower canals, in the poorer quarters of Venice, or to the special sights of the town, such as the fishmarket. When the gondolier had found a specially interesting route, Wagner would reward him with an extra fee of a few francs. He liked to mingle with the poor of Venice, and when he came across a case of pathetic poverty, always had a few

[1] For most of the foregoing details regarding his life in Venice and many following ones, I am indebted to an entertaining brochure of 150 pages, by Henry Perl, entitled *Richard Wagner in Venedig* (Augsburg, 1883). Mr. Perl was a friend of Dr. Keppler, who daily visited the Vendramin palace; he also obtained details from other sources, including the gondoliers and the servants. Thus his book is a mosaic which brings Wagner in his last months vividly before the eyes, and which must be commended to all who would know the great composer's personality. A few inaccuracies which occur in it are pardonable.

francs to bestow. Everybody in the city, rich and poor, soon knew the kind-hearted *Tedesco*, with the large gray hat and the brown overcoat. Genius inspires respect even if its manifestations are not understood; a remark repeatedly overheard by Mr. Perl indicates the attitude of the naïve Venetian populace towards the great German — "They say he is more than a king; is it not so?"

Before dark, the Meister was always back in the Palace, and the twilight hours were devoted to confidential chats with his wife. She was more to him than even her father had been, for conjugal love is deeper than friendship. He adored her, and she worshipped him. All his wishes were anticipated, with an ingenuity known only to the unselfish love of woman. To her he could impart all his plans, talk over his projects, knowing that they would be appreciated; she was his secretary, and his amanuensis whenever he was in the mood for dictating. As twilight deepened into night, the Palace was illuminated to an extent which astonished the Italians. The portier of the Vendramin, a younger brother of Byron's gondolier, was reminded thereby of that English poet's fondness for brilliant illumination of his apartments. Supper was eaten at seven or eight, and afterwards one of the daughters would read an hour or two from a book chosen by her father. Sometimes he declaimed something from one of his works, and Perl relates that on one occasion he became so impassioned that the domestics were alarmed, fearing an accident had happened. If a humorous selection was read, his hearty laughter proved contagious to all; if a serious selection, he would here and there interrupt the reader to make a few explanatory remarks or comments.

A JUVENILE WORK REVIVED

By the arrival of Liszt, on Nov. 19, the family circle was agreeably enlarged. Liszt was an earlier riser even than Wagner. He got up at four, and devoted the morning hours to composition.[1] After work hours, for the rest of the day, he and his son-in-law were inseparable. In the evening, the great pianist sometimes played alone, or accompanied the young folks when they sang a chorus from *Parsifal*. Wagner was particularly fond, in his last weeks, of dwelling on scenes of his youth, and playing his earliest compositions. A special occasion for this was given by the discovery of his long-lost symphony. In a previous chapter (I. 29–31) we traced the history of this symphony to the time when it was lost. It had been performed three times, — in the summer of 1832, at Prague, on Christmas, 1832, and on Jan. 10, 1833, in Leipzig. The score was then submitted to Mendelssohn, and that is the last that has ever been heard of it. Fortunately, the separate orchestral parts had not been given to Mendelssohn; they might still be in existence, but where? So thought Wagner about the time of the first Bayreuth Festival. He had founded a sort of Wagner Museum for his son Siegfried, and he was anxious to add the manuscript of his symphony to this collection. So he asked Wilhelm Tappert to use his detective's genius for its discovery. Tappert asked

[1] In Number 363 of the *Letters of Liszt*, published by Breitkopf und Härtel (1893) reference is made to a composition for piano and violin or violoncello, with a transcription for piano solo: "The title is *La Lugubre Gondole* (the mourning gondola). As if guided by a presentiment, I wrote this elegy in Venice, six weeks before Wagner's death."

everywhere, at first in Mendelssohn's family and of the executors of his will, then in Magdeburg, Riga, and Dresden. At last, in November, 1877, Professor Fürstenau, royal librarian in Dresden, succeeded in finding in a box, which Wagner had left in the house of the tenor Tichatschek, when he fled from Dresden, the manuscripts of three of his earlier overtures, and the violin part of some other composition. These were sent to Tappert, who, from some signs, discovered that the violin part must belong to the symphony sought for. Further search revealed the other parts, excepting the two trombones. Tappert forthwith sent the discovered treasure to Bayreuth, where Frau Cosima surprised and delighted her husband by playing to him the motive of one of the movements; he jumped up excitedly, and exclaimed, "My old symphony — that is it!"

Having recovered the parts of the score, he asked his secretary, Anton Seidl, to put them together into a new score, and the missing trombone parts were added. Then, for six years, the symphony rested in the "Siegfried Archiv." In December, 1882, it occurred to him that "although the recovery could have no other significance than that of a friendly family tradition," it would be pleasant to hear the work once more. His wife's birthday, on Christmas, was selected as the date of the performance, to which only a few friends of the family were to be invited. Count Coutin, president of the Liceo Benedetto Marcello, kindly placed his concert-room and orchestra at the disposal of Wagner, who says (X. 403): —

"Let me testify, first of all, that the rendering by the orchestra of the Liceo greatly satisfied me, owing, no doubt, to the number

of rehearsals, which long ago at Leipzig had been refused to me. The natural gifts of Italian musicians for tone and expression might lead to excellent developments if Italian taste would interest itself in German instrumental music. My symphony really seemed to please."

The distinguished Italian critic, Filippo Filippi, who happened to be in Venice at this time, wrote that —

"Wagner attends the daily rehearsals of this, his juvenile composition, with the greatest ardor. He is sometimes nervous and irritable. Altogether he is well pleased with the orchestra at the Liceo, whose members applaud enthusiastically at the end of every division of the symphony.

"The style of it is an imitation of Beethoven, but remains perfectly individual. The ideas are new, full of impulse, splendidly harmonious, admirably developed, and instrumented in a way that shows traces of what has become the polyphonic system of the last manner."

Wagner himself (X. 403–405) was rather inclined to poke fun at this "old-fashioned" work, especially at the kind of themes which, as he pregnantly said (and this applies to many other symphonies), "do very well for counterpoint, but express little" — one of those terse sayings which contain a world of philosophy.[1]

[1] The symphony lasts about forty-five minutes. It is written for large orchestra, including trombones. Mr. J. S. Shedlock is no doubt right in pronouncing the scherzo the most original movement, and in saying that "looking at the symphony as a whole, it is of considerable interest, and quite as full of promise as any of the early symphonies of Schubert." An elaborate technical analysis of it may be found in Upton's *Standard Symphonies*. Wagner himself did not wish this symphony to be given to the world; but his heirs justly decided to satisfy universal curiosity by allowing the agent Wolff (in return for $12,000) the right of lending the score for a year to concert-givers.

ILLNESS AND DEATH

Extremes have never met more strikingly than they did when the aged Master, in the zenith of his glory, resurrected this early work exactly half a century after its creation. When he laid aside the bâton, he exclaimed, "I have conducted for the last time." His health had been in a precarious condition ever since he had arrived in Venice, and of late it had taken a turn for the worse, so that his mind was darkened by presentiments. He was fortunate in having been able, soon after his arrival, to place himself under the care of a first-class German physician, Dr. Friedrich Keppler. The fact that Dr. Keppler did not appreciate his music made him none the less welcome as an adviser and intimate friend, to whom his famous patient not only confided his physical troubles, but many of his other affairs. When the symptoms were unfavorable, Wagner was particularly solicitous that his family should be kept in ignorance of the fact. It cannot be denied that he was not a model patient. He constantly violated the doctor's orders, especially in regard to mental work, for which he had the same uncontrollable passion as in his youth; and when his strength failed he resorted to coffee, tea, and other stimulants to spur on the tired brain, which needed absolute rest, especially as he had heart-trouble, in which continued rest is the best remedy. When he had a bad day, he put the blame on an error of diet, or on the weather, which indeed did, more than ever, influence his health. When Dr. Keppler took charge of him, he found him indulging in the pernicious habit of taking all sorts

of medicines that had been recommended to him by previous physicians. The original source of his trouble was doubtless his dyspepsia, the result of his starvation in Paris and subsequent careless habits of diet. In the last months of his life he suffered from dilatation of the stomach and other abdominal troubles, which gradually affected the heart, and led to its enlargement and fatty degeneration.[1] The occasional difficulty of breathing resulting from this heart trouble (especially in depressing weather) gave rise to his curious habit of putting his hands on his back when walking, to facilitate respiration; indeed, his tailor had for years made overcoats for him with two pockets on the back for the hands. Locomotion had a tendency to relieve his distress, consequently he often walked about the palace for hours at a time. After New Year his symptoms became aggravated. He would sometimes go for a walk, but return in a few moments, breathing with difficulty and groaning. He now began to pay more attention to the doctor's warnings, but every respite sent him back to his work. He had several fainting fits, and on recovering, his first care was that his wife and children should not hear about it. Liszt left Venice toward the middle of the month; on Jan. 13 the two friends embraced for the last time; exactly a month later one of the hearts ceased to beat. A few days before this catastrophe, Wagner had planned an excursion to Verona with Siegfried, which the doctor approved of; but bad weather frustrated his intentions. On the twelfth he felt uncommonly well — unfortunately,

[1] See Dr. Keppler's report prefixed to Perl's *Richard Wagner in Venedig*. The hernial trouble had been aggravated by a badly adjusted bandage, the correction of which gave the patient a pleasant temporary relief.

for it apparently led him to overexert himself fatally on the unlucky thirteenth. On this last day he rose as usual at six, and busied himself, it is believed, with the preparations and instructions for the coming summer's Festival at Bayreuth. Conductor Levi of Munich had just been in Venice to bring him the latest news. It was raining in torrents, but the gondola was ordered, as usual, to be ready at four, in hopes of a change. He gave instructions that he must not be disturbed before two o'clock. The maid, Betty Bürgel, remained in the anteroom, according to her custom, in case he should want anything. At one o'clock she was summoned by the bell. Wagner asked if the gondola had been ordered, and said he wished to dine alone; a plate of soup would suffice, as he was not feeling well. The soup was brought, and Betty resumed her place. Shortly afterwards she heard her master walking about the room, coughing persistently. She felt alarmed, and was about to call Cosima, when she heard her name faintly called. She hastened into the room and found Wagner lying on his sofa, partly covered by his fur, his feet on a chair, his features terribly distorted. With difficulty he said, "Call my wife and the doctor." These were the last words that came from his lips. His death-struggle was hard and agonizing.

Betty hastened to call Cosima, and several messengers were despatched after Dr. Keppler. When Cosima hurried into her husband's room she found him dying; but she did not know it. She fancied he was merely in a swoon, and tried various means of restoring him. When the doctor arrived and informed her of the true state of affairs, she uttered a piercing cry, clasped the body in

her arms, and fainted away. For twenty-six hours she refused to leave the body or to take any nourishment, till she swooned again and could be removed. The news of Wagner's death was all over Venice in an hour; at every street-corner, people were saying, "Richard Wagner is dead." Five thousand telegrams relating to this event were despatched from Venice in twenty-four hours. Henry Perl met the Master's gondolier at the station, with a bundle of telegrams in his hand, and almost speechless from grief, but gasping out something about "the good, noble, only man, who never spoke an unkind word to us, however ill he was." A despatch arrived from King Ludwig, requesting that the body should not be touched until his messenger had arrived. Deputations came, offering a grand and becoming funeral pageant on the part of the city of Venice; but the widow could not endure the thought of it, and declined the kind offer. Among the wreaths sent were two from King Ludwig and the King of Italy. King Humbert's wreath was trimmed with black, red, and gold ribbands. King Ludwig's was tied with blue and white satin streamers, with this inscription in golden letters: "To the Master, Richard Wagner, from his devoted admirer and King, Ludwig."

Herr Gross of Bayreuth came as the King's messenger to superintend the transfer of the body to German soil. Liszt fainted when the death-message was brought to him at Pesth, and his prostration was so great that he could not come to Venice. Hans Richter came from Vienna, whence also a superb sarcophagus had been ordered. In the meantime the city of Venice had made a second offer of an official funeral, which again was

declined by the widow. The Palace had to be surrounded with guards to keep off the crowd. To the room where the body lay no one was admitted except a few friends, including Dr. Keppler, Hans Richter, and the Countess Hatzfeld. Cosima, in the agony of her grief, had cut off her long blonde hair, which her husband had always loved to have her wear loose over her shoulder, and placed it on a red satin cushion under his head, to be buried with him. Cosima did not wish a death-mask, but it was taken, nevertheless, by the sculptor Benvenuti, without her knowledge.

It was on a sultry, rainy day, with thunder and lightning, that Wagner had died. On the sixteenth, when the body was to be taken to Germany, the sun shone brightly in the blue sky. At two o'clock, eight men, including Richter, Keppler, and Joukowsky, bore the coffin from the Palace down to the black gondola, followed by servants with the wreaths. The family soon followed, and boarded other black gondolas. It was the widow's express wish that there should be no funeral music; she feared it would rend her heart in twain. So the procession moved along the canal in solemn silence, broken only by the tolling of a distant bell. The canal was lined with hundreds of gondolas filled with sympathetic Italians who regretted that the widow had refused the offer of an official funeral.

By order of the city authorities, the railway station had been shut off to all but passengers, the official representatives of Venice, and the funeral cortege. The coffin was placed in a special mourning car, draped in black, which had been sent from Vienna; a parlor-car behind it was reserved for the mourners. These cars were

attached to the regular express train as far as Vicenza, whence they were taken as an extra train *via* Verona and Munich to Bayreuth. Special orders had been given by the Italian, Austrian, and German government officials that the train should not be detained or examined at the frontiers.

BURIAL AT BAYREUTH

Nowhere had the news of Wagner's death produced more consternation than at Bayreuth, the city rejuvenated by his genius. The whole town was draped in mourning. Before the arrival of the funeral train, the hotels had again filled up, as during Festival days. A black flag floated over the theatre on the hill, black flags darkened the windows along the main avenues, and the street-lamps were draped in black. Representatives of various German princes, of theatres, of the leading Wagner Societies, eminent conductors and other musicians and friends of the deceased were present to do him the last honor. It was the widow's desire that the body should be buried in presence of only a few intimate friends, and without any address or music. The public ceremony, therefore, took place at the station, after the coffin had been removed from the car to a tribune. The proceedings began at four o'clock, on the seventeenth, with the playing of Siegfried's Death March. Burgomaster Muncker then delivered a brief and touching address, followed by Friedrich Feustel, from whose remarks[1] two sentences may be quoted: "Future generations will find it difficult to believe what they will

[1] These addresses are printed complete in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, March 2, 1883.

read about the impediments that were placed in this great man's way in his efforts to attain his ideal." "The performance of *Parsifal* this year will be the most dignified memorial service for the deceased."

A special touch of reminiscent pathos was given by the arrangement that after these addresses the Bayreuth Liederkranz should sing the chorus on motives from Weber's operas which Wagner had arranged for that composer's burial in Dresden. The procession was then marshalled into line: first a military band, then a carriage loaded with wreaths. This was followed by the hearse, drawn by four black horses, attended by all the local clergymen, and the pall-bearers, including Albert Niemann, Anton Seidl, Wilhelmj, Porges, Fritz Brandt, Levi, and others. Behind the hearse came King Ludwig's representative, Count Pappenheim; then friends of the family, deputations of cities, theatres, and Wagner Societies; artists, journalists, and officers; then another band followed by the citizens of Bayreuth, thousands of whom had assembled at the station. At 5.30 the procession moved through the city towards the villa Wahnfried, to the funeral dirges of the bands, deepened by the doleful sounds of all the bells in the city. Half-way down the Rennweg (now Richard Wagner Street), the music stopped, and the villa was reached in silence. The coffin was lifted off the carriage and carried into the garden, where Eva and Siegfried Wagner awaited it. It was then carried to the grave behind the house, followed by members of the family, friends, artists, and journalists. At the open grave, Deacon Kesselmann spoke a short prayer during which a touching incident occurred. Two of Wagner's large black

dogs had followed the procession, and as Eva and Siegfried sank down on their knees, one of them came and licked their faces, as if sympathizing with their grief; and why should he not? Had he not also lost his best friend? After the prayer, all but the children left the grave, such being the desire of Cosima, who now joined her family to weep her tears unobserved by other eyes. For months and years she watched and wept over this grave every evening. The *Parsifal* Festival was again held in the summer, but she was not accessible to artists or visitors — not even to her father, Liszt. The pleasant duty of thanking the artists, after the last performance, for their continued devotion, devolved on her children. Before the next Festival was due, however, she had made a heroic effort to subdue her grief sufficiently to begin what was to be the work of her life — the attempt to carry out Wagner's intentions as to the periodical model performances of all his works at Bayreuth. The grave, too, which had been jealously guarded from stranger-eyes, was made accessible. Almost every Bayreuth pilgrim now pays it a visit. It is a low, square mound, covered by a large horizontal marble slab, its sloping sides now overrun with ivy. Low, shady trees surround it, and visitors who approach it from the side of the city park are prevented by an iron grating from despoiling it of its ivy dress, but not from throwing on the white marble slab the wreaths and bouquets with which it is always covered during the Festival weeks. A plain rustic bench stands on one side, and a narrow path leads thence to the widow Cosima's garden.

WAGNER AND WAGNERISM

PERSONAL TRAITS

HAD he lived three months longer, Richard Wagner would have attained the three-score-and-ten years allotted to man by the Scriptures. Preparations to celebrate his seventieth birthday had been made in various parts of Germany; but the jubilation was changed to sorrow, and Siegfried's Death March had to be substituted for the Huldigungsmarsch. Seventy years is a long life — twice the average duration of a human generation, and about twice as long as the life of Mozart (thirty-five), Schubert (thirty-one), Weber (forty), Mendelssohn (thirty-eight), Chopin (forty). Wagner, however, hoped for twenty years more. His family had quite made up their minds that he was to live ninety years, and he used to remark that even that would not be enough to allow him to put on paper all the schemes he had in his head. What were these schemes — musical or literary? On this point the widow Cosima alone can perhaps enlighten the world. The rumor that there was to be a new Buddhistic music-drama, *The Victor* (or *The Penitent*), was evidently without foundation, for the material collected for such a drama was, as we have seen, partly incorporated in *Parsifal*. There were also rumors that he contemplated studies tending to a revival of Greek music — to which

no credence need be given. It seems most probable that he intended to write some more philosophical treatises, in which case the world's loss is not excessive; for in philosophy (the branch of æsthetics, of course, excepted), his mind remained to the end a gallery of echoes, and his style obscure.

Whatever his subject might have been, we may be sure that had he lived another decade or two another music-drama or several more volumes of prose writings would have been given to the world. A passion for hard work, amounting at times to fanaticism, was one of his most conspicuous traits, and lay at the bottom of the unsociability and inaccessibility with which he was so often reproached. Could he have curbed this eagerness for work, he might have lived longer. He wrote up to the very hour of his death. The last thing we possess from his pen is a fragment of an essay intended for the *Bayreuther Blätter*. Its beginning is dated Feb. 11, and its title is "The Feminine Element in Humanity." To its contents reference was made in a previous chapter ("Romantic Love in Wagner's Operas"); here I merely wish to call attention to the interesting fact that the last sentence he ever wrote for public use relates to what he calls "the beautiful trait" in the Buddhist legend which vindicates woman's claim to the saintly privileges previously arrogated by man alone. It was fitting that one who so adored women as he did, and was worshipped by them in return, should thus die with a good word for them on his lips. In one letter he refers to himself as "I who praised women more than Frauenlob"; in another, he exclaims with reference to the newly created Brünnhilde, "I believe I can assure you that never before has

woman been glorified as in this poem." And again: "Women are the music of life." In saying that "with women's hearts it has always gone well with my art," he was right too; for the favor shown to him personally, and to his art by women, was, from the beginning, so marked that ungallant opponents fancied they had scored a great point against the Wagnerites in general by referring to them with the feminine ending, as Wagnerianerinnen!

The woman who worshipped him most of all was his second wife; her devotion assumed the valuable form of saving him much of the drudgery of the last twenty years of his life. To her, among other things, he dictated his Autobiography (reaching to 1865), in three volumes,[1] and it is said that a continuation of this was one of the tasks set for the winter in which he died. In his autobiographic writings, Wagner is usually at his best, — bright, witty, entertaining, — whereas his other prose works are of very unequal merit as regards clearness of style and thought; many of them were written "against the grain," in the frantic desire to enlighten the world as to his aims; yet when he had once plunged into them, he gave his whole energy to his task, as much as when engaged in the more congenial composition of music or poetry.

When he was with friends — or enemies — he generally did most of the talking, being in this respect the opposite of Schumann. When he was alone, — as he usually was, preferring, like most men of genius, solitude

[1] In Oesterlein's *Katalog*, III. 13, there is an extract from one of Wagner's letters to a Basel publisher in 1871, beginning: "I herewith send you the next sheet of manuscript, which contains the conclusion of the second volume. This is indicated on page 562." The third volume was printed by Burger in Bayreuth.

to society, — he bottled up his garrulous propensities in letters, of which an enormous number are in existence. Of the 316 in the correspondence with Liszt, 190 are from his pen — far more than half, and fully two-thirds in the number of pages. To his Dresden friends, Uhlig, Fischer, and Heine, he wrote 177 letters in a decade; Heckel received about sixty, Praeger forty, and so on. Excluding the letters here mentioned, Emerich Kastner has published a pamphlet of fifty-three pages[1] giving a chronological list of Wagner's letters to various prominent persons; in the preface he states that he has in his collection almost a hundred, beside the 413 here catalogued. But even this list is very far from complete. In Oesterlein's three-volume *Wagner Katalog* many more letters are enumerated, and new ones are constantly coming to light in the German papers. In a note to Uhlig he apologizes for his "confused scrawl: it is the sixth letter I have written to-day"; and there is reason to think that this was nothing exceptional, although he disliked letter-writing, unless he could pour out his heart's grief to a dear friend.[2] When all of his letters are printed, we shall have at least three or four volumes beside the three already in existence; which with the ten volumes of his poems, and prose works, and his several

[1] *Briefe Richard Wagner's* (1830–1883), Wien, 1885.

[2] Herr Oesterlein informed me that up to 1846 (or 1847) Wagner used German script, but after that he wrote his letters, including the German, in "Latin" script. It is a small, nervous, elegant handwriting, usually easy to read, but somewhat less legible in German than in French letters, while in the latter more words are cancelled. Two other peculiarities of his writing may be here mentioned. In his poems he capitalizes the first word in a line only when it begins a new sentence; and in his posthumous volume of sketches and fragments he does not follow the absurd German custom of capitalizing every noun.

volumes of memoirs, will make about twenty; and all this in addition to a dozen scores all but two or three of which contain musical material enough for a dozen ordinary Italian, French, or German operas! As an indefatigable worker, Wagner certainly has had few rivals.

He was fond, too, of reading, and his well-stocked and carefully selected library of musical, mythological, dramatic, historic, philosophical, and other books was the wonder of all who were privileged to visit his villa at Bayreuth. Not being a good linguist, he was obliged to read many famous books in translations. Mr. Dannreuther says that,

"with Shakespeare (in German, of course) he was as familiar as with Beethoven. To hear him read an act or a scene was a delight never to be forgotten. The effect, to use his own words about Shakespeare, was that of 'an improvisation of the highest poetic value.' When in particularly good spirits, he would take up a comic scene and render it with the exuberant merriment of a child."

On some of the most conspicuous personal traits, tastes, and habits, it is not necessary to dwell here again, as they have been sufficiently discussed and illustrated in preceding pages, especially those headed Truth in Fiction, Life in Zürich, A Modern Prometheus, Hygiene and Gastronomy, Love of Nature and Travel, Royal and Other Visitors, Love of Luxury, Love of Animals, Playfulness and Humor, etc.[1] His appearance has also been repeatedly described, but a brief résumé may not be out of place here. If we look at his face, the two features that first strike us are the noble, massive forehead — the

[1] Readers who wish to collate all the evidence regarding his character, should consult the index sub "Wagner, R., Personal Traits."

thinker — and the prominent, stubborn chin — the reformer. These are the traits best known to the world. They are the true Wagner, but not the whole of him. Look at the face again, — especially in the Elliot and Fry photograph (1877), showing it from the right in rather more than profile, — and you will discover the other side of his character, the kindly expression of his refined, delicate lips, the serene look of his eye, the pathetic line from the nose down the cheek, telling of untold suffering, yet without a touch of the sneering expression that might be expected in one whom a hostile world had, by its opposition, converted into a pessimist. His upper lip and chin were clean-shaven, but hair fringed his cheeks, and the hair on his head retained its vigor and much of its color to the last. The head seemed large in proportion to the body, which was barely of medium height, as was especially noticeable when he walked with his wife, Cosima, whose arm he usually took, as she was considerably taller. In his movements he was quick and nervous, and his gestures were usually vivid. In regard to his dress he was neat; at home he loved silk and satin for his own attire, as well as for his wife's.

Wagner's striking personal appearance, combined with his usual hostile relations to the press of his period, gave rise to an endless number of caricatures, an excellent collection of which (130 in number), with a running commentary, has been made by John Grand Carteret.[1] The pictorial caricaturists, however, seldom succeeded in burlesquing his appearance so absurdly as the journalists did his character. Schopenhauer has truly remarked that "mental superiority of every kind is a very isolating

[1] *Richard Wagner en Caricatures*, Paris.

quality: it is shunned and hated, and by way of supplying a pretext for this, its possessor is accused of all sorts of fictitious faults." Never was a man more lied about, by envious colleagues and common gossip, than Wagner. Not that he was free from faults; far from it. Great mountains throw deep shadows, and the shadow of Wagner's displeasure often chilled everything about him. Yet I believe that every careful reader of the foregoing pages must have come to the conclusion that he was more sinned against than sinning. His faults were such as are common to reformers, perhaps inseparable from them — a violent temper (more violent perhaps than Handel's or Beethoven's), a blunt lack of tact and diplomacy, a selfish absorption in his own work and plans, an egotistic contempt for the interests of others, a reckless disposition in regard to money matters, an unsocial attitude toward his colleagues and the world in general.

These faults, however, were the inevitable shadows of his virtues. "Revolutions are not made with civilities." Had he not used his club against intendants, singers, critics, and Philistines in general, he could not have personally carried out his various reforms, and his art might have had to wait a century or two for recognition, like Bach's. Mr. Dannreuther remarks that "towards the public, and the world of actors, singers, musicians, his habitual attitude was one of defiance. He appeared on the point of losing his temper, showed impatience and irritation, and seemed to delight in tearing men and things to pieces." True, but why was this so? Was it not simply because things were out of joint, and he wanted to right them? In Munich, and at Bayreuth, where the singers and players had the good will and

sense to follow him, he was the most amiable of masters. In Paris and London it was otherwise, but the fault was certainly not his. Had he been received in the same spirit as at Munich and Bayreuth, he would have never shown his temper. He was always right in what he wanted, but the right thing was not wanted by those who harassed him. "This constant necessity of drawing myself together in self-defence only inspires me with defiance and disgust," he wrote in London; and in that sentence we have the explanation of this irritable side of his character. Not the whole explanation, however. Many of his bad moods and explosions of wrath had their origin in his dyspepsia and overwork. "People often call me irascible, when I am simply ill," he used to say. Think, too, of the extraordinary series of disappointments that were his fate until he had passed his fiftieth year; the Paris failures; the Dresden fiascos; the ten years' war to get his operas into Berlin; the twenty years he had to wait, after *Tannhäuser*, before he could bring out another of his operas personally. Think of the almost incredible fact that he was forty-four years old, and had written all but three of his works, before a single one of his operas was produced at Vienna, Munich, or Stuttgart; that he was fifty-six and over before Italy, France, and England began even with his early operas. Think of the thousand disagreeable experiences related in the foregoing pages, and you will, if not pardon, at any rate understand, his attitude toward the public, and his inevitable pessimism.

To be accused of abolishing melody, when no one was ever more truly melodious; to be accused of destroying

musical form, when he was the real creator of organic form for dramatic music; to be accused of despising and abusing the great masters, when no one ever worshipped them as he did; to be accused of egotism, commercialism, puffery, sybaritic indulgence, when he had really sacrificed the comforts of almost his whole life to the attainment of a seemingly impossible ideal; to be accused of all these things, not ten times, but ten thousand times, until all the world believed the mammoth lies, — was this an experience to make a man amiable in his feelings and conduct toward the world? Was he a contemptible beggar because he was not ashamed to accept money from a few friends who loved him? Was he not right in saying "whoever helps me, only helps my art through me, and the sacred cause for which I am fighting"? He was an egotist; his "sacred cause" absorbed all his thoughts, all his energies; his letters are all about himself; when he helped others by teaching them to sing or conduct, it was chiefly with a view to the interpretation of his own works. A colossal egotism, no doubt, but was not his task colossal too? Where should he have found time and energy to help others in their schemes, when he himself needed hundreds to help him carry out his own? Such egotism is not only pardonable; it is desirable and praiseworthy.

There were times when Wagner's friends and admirers were made to feel his displeasure, as on one occasion when an enthusiastic bandmaster, after serenading him with the *Tannhäuser* March and the *Lohengrin* Bridal Chorus, went to his room to receive thanks for his attention, and was, instead, received by the angry words, "Have I composed nothing but those two everlasting

pieces?" Yet, even here, though we feel sorry for the poor bandmaster, we cannot help sympathizing with his victim. Apart from such ebullitions, he was the most amiable and cordial man to his friends, who, in turn, worshipped him almost fanatically. One admirable trait of his character was his genuine democracy: he took everybody on his own merits. Rank, wealth, position, had no influence on his estimate of others. Ludwig he adored, not as King, but as a man and a friend. To subordinates and servants, public and private, he was as polite as to his equals. In Venice, after a ride, he always lifted his hat and said good by to the humble gondolier. To his servants he never spoke an unkind word, even when vexed by illness; and seldom was a dish served at his table which was not also supplied to all the household domestics. It is in such minute matters that a man's inner nature is truly revealed. And what a wealth of kindness and affection this man had for the animal kingdom too! To the anecdotes previously related, others might be added about the interruption of his work on the *Meistersinger* score, owing to a bite in his right hand given by a vagrant dog he had rescued from starvation; of the long letter he wrote to a man in Vienna remonstrating against the cruelty of keeping his dog chained all the time; of a kitten saved from the Grand Canal and raised in the Vendramin palace. His solicitude for his pets went so far that when he had a supply of puppies he was careful to give them away only after making sure that they would have a happy home in a large country residence!

To sum up, the assertion that Wagner's character was harsh and unkind is as unmitigated a falsehood as the

charge that his music is all dissonance and no melody. His heart was overflowing with tender love. He loved his art fanatically, and would have gone through the fire for it, like a religious martyr; he loved nature, he loved animals, he loved his friends, and his heart was aching to have all the world as friends through his art. He wanted sympathy, wanted to be encouraged in his devotion to his ideal; yet, for many years, Liszt and a few other friends were the only ones who gave him such sympathy and support. Dr. Hanslick, in one of his essays written after Wagner's death, has the extraordinary audacity to intimate that there has never been any real opposition to Wagner, but only to the Wagnerites!! Every page of this biography belies that assertion; Wagner himself, in one of his letters, refers to such a statement as "that old trick." And how was he affected by the unjust aspersions of his enemies? In his posthumous volume (89) he speaks of his having "from the beginning met our music-journal writers with a contempt such as has probably never been exhibited more strongly in this world." Yet we know that he often suffered great mental tortures from the unjust attacks on him and his art. In Letter 67 to Uhlig, he refers to a certain assault on him: —

"I do not read it, because, though I should not intend to reply (and I certainly *will* not any more), yet what is written runs in my head for several days, and that might be occupied with something better."

A man in his position cannot escape being harassed by friends, too. One time, as Wolzogen relates, he received from an admirer a letter suggesting how the Ride of the

Valkyries might have been improved, the proposed changes being enclosed.

"The composer of the inferior *Walkürenritt* used to relate how grateful he felt towards his brother-in-law, Ollivier, the French minister of 1870, for the good advice, which he so often had to follow in his life: 'Do not reply.'"

In a letter to Liszt (244) he complains bitterly about the class of silly enthusiasts who write rubbish about him, and then expect to be praised. He felt keenly the fact that most of the wits in the press were arraigned against him; and in a letter to the editor of the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* he exclaims that usually he does not breathe freely until he comes across an article by the witty Tappert.[1]

The very stubbornness, egotism, and self-assertion which made him so many enemies and were so often censured, were among his most useful qualities to the world: through them he asserted the royalty of genius in society as in his own field of activity, and once for all established the fact that the creator of a music-drama,

[1] Tappert, *Allgem. deutsche Musikztg.* (August, 1880), quotes an article of one of these "Wagnerites" in which this remarkable sentence occurs: "If everything that other musicians, poets, and philosophers have left us were burned, and only Wagner's *Nibelungen* remained, the world would not only be no loser, but it would gain, because it could then at once and uninterruptedly devote itself to the study of the *Nibelungen.*" This equals anything that might be cited from Nietzsche's writings for or against Wagner. Nietzsche, the well-known philologist, was at first an ardent Wagnerite and wrote obscure stuff of which Dr. Hanslick truly wrote that the reader "might fancy himself in a lunatic asylum." A few years later he suddenly changed about and wrote in a similar style against his former idol (see *Der Fall Wagner*, in which Bizet is represented as the operatic god, and Wagner as the devil). *Facilis descensus averni!* Shortly thereafter the perpetrator of this pamphlet was placed where he belonged — in a lunatic asylum.

and not the mere interpreter, is the more important personage. His reforms extended to everything connected with the stage, — the music, the drama and its subject, the singers, the actors, the orchestra, the scenery and stage-management, the ballet, the theatre itself, and even the audiences and their behavior. An influence like his has never been exerted by one man in any art, and to-day the Wagnerian Maelstrom is engulfing the whole musical world. Future generations will admire him for the new and beautiful art he created, and they will "love him for the enemies he made" in the necessary process of slaughtering prejudices and "assassinating formulas." Most of his reforms have been touched upon repeatedly in the preceding pages; but several of them are of such extreme importance that they must be separately, though briefly, considered in this concluding chapter.

POETIC PECULIARITIES

In considering Wagner as a poet, the first and most important fact that forces itself on the attention is that he established for all time the truth that in the opera, as much as in a simple drama, "the play's the thing" and the music merely a means for intensifying the emotions. Gluck had the same idea, but unfortunately he could not find a poet great enough to help him to its realization. It seemed necessary that the poet and the musician should be one and the same person. Other composers before Wagner had taken more or less part in the shaping and writing of their librettos — Rousseau, Lortzing, Schumann, Donizetti; but in these cases it was simply a process of adapting a novel or a literary drama

to the artificial operatic formulas. Once, and only once, did Wagner follow the same plan; his *Rienzi* is based on a novel by Bulwer. But after that he went to the original sources, to the legends, and shaped them for himself, with special reference to the music-drama, from the very beginning.

Quite apart from the question whether these legends are the only proper, or the best, sources for operatic plots, it is clear that one of Wagner's greatest poetic merits lies in the fact that he introduced an entirely new world on the operatic stage — not only new forms, but new subjects, new atmospheric effects, new charms of local color, in place of the worn-out plots that had so often done service in romances, plays, operas, and burlesques. Before the appearance of his mythical operas, the German people knew everything relating to Greek and Roman mythology, but nothing about their own Northern deities and the romantic legends relating to them. To-day all educated youths and maidens know Wotan and Brünnhilde, Fricka and Donner, as well as they do Jupiter and Venus, Mars and Diana. The music-dramas of one man have thus accomplished in a few decades what the united efforts of all the philologists, who previously monopolized a knowledge of these legends, could not have done in centuries. Such an achievement alone would ensure him a place among the immortals.

From a purely dramatic and theatrical point of view, Wagner is the greatest poet Germany has ever produced. Neither Lessing, nor Schiller, nor Goethe, nor any of the later playwrights, have shown such a keen instinct for legitimate dramatic effect, and such an art of building up a climax as he has in his best works. The extraordi-

nary and constantly growing popularity of his operas demonstrates the truth of this assertion. Much of this success is, of course, owing to the music; but that the best of music cannot float an opera with a poor libretto is shown by the unhappy fate of Weber's *Euryanthe* and Schumann's *Genoveva*. Concerning this dramatic side of Wagner's poems, enough has been said in the special chapters devoted to them in the preceding pages, so that we can confine ourselves here to their other peculiarities.

Mozart once said that "poetry in the opera ought to be absolutely the obedient daughter of music." This maxim, followed to its logical end, gave rise to the operatic monstrosities of Rossini and Donizetti. Gluck showed himself a much truer artist in this respect when he wrote to La Harpe that "the union between the air and the words should be so close that the poem should seem made for the music no less than the music for the poem." Wagner adapted neither the poem to the music nor the music to the poem; he cast them both into the same crucible, and they came out fused in material and form. On March 4, 1854, he wrote to Liszt: "I could no longer, under any conditions, produce a melody to Schiller's verses, which certainly are made only to be read." He wanted poetry intended from the beginning to be sung, not read; and as he could find it nowhere, — although almost three thousand librettos were offered him by contemporaries, — he wrote it himself.

If we compare Wagner's poems of the first, second, and third period, we find some curious differences and apparent inconsistencies. In *The Fairies* and *Rienzi* the old operatic models are followed, and many of the

verses are crude; in the *Dutchman*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Lohengrin* there are fewer crudities, but the operatic influence is still noticeable to some extent, especially in the retention of the rhyme; in the *Nibelung's Ring* he discards rhyme, and adopts alliteration; in *Tristan* both rhyme and alliteration are used; while in his last two poems, *Meistersinger* and *Parsifal*, alliteration is abandoned and rhyme restored. For these changes it is not difficult to find the reasons. In his theoretical period, when he reflected on the why and wherefore of all he had done, and was to do in future, he naturally came to the conclusion that rhyme, as commonly used in operatic poetry, is superfluous or even objectionable; it not only leads to incorrect accentuation, but is usually drowned in the flood of musical sound (IV. 142; X. 211). Rhyme is the melodic element in verse — a consonance of sounds at the end of lines which appears primitive when compared with the endless variety of musical sounds and combinations in an opera; its absence is therefore not likely to be missed, and when it leads to wrong accentuation it becomes inartistic.

Alliteration, on the other hand, may be a powerful ally of the operatic poet. It is the old Teutonic custom of repeating the same letters or sounds (consonants or vowels) in two or more words of the same or the neighboring line. The accent falls on the alliterating syllable, and the root of the word is thus emphasized. By choosing harsh or smooth words, the poet can give his verses a definite emotional character, expressing anger, hatred, jealousy, or love. Some of the most striking instances in the whole *Nibelung* score occur in the first scene of *Rheingold*. When Alberich attempts to capture

one of the Rhine-maidens, but "slides on the slippery slime," one need not know German to understand his exclamation, —

> "Garstig glatter
> glitschriger Glimmer!
> wie gleit' ich aus!"

How beautifully, too, the meaningless opening sounds of the water-maidens: "Weia, waga, woge du Welle," etc., go with their waving song and swimming motion! The German journalists expended an endless amount of ridicule on these lines, as well as on the wild "Hojotoho" cries of the Valkyries; but when these sounds were sung on the stage, every one marvelled at the delightful effect. The poet knew what the musician needed. Two other classical specimens of alliterative mood-painting are the love-song of Siegmund in the *Walküre*, and Mime's attempt, in *Siegfried*, to describe to that hero the feeling of fear produced by forest phenomena: "Fühltest du nie," etc.

Alliteration, too, seems to link the words together and to aid the memory, like rhyme, thus proving an advantage to vocalists; and it also produces a certain rhythmic flow and animation. Yet, all things considered, it seems probable that Wagner's main reason for adopting alliteration was an unconscious craving for local color. Alliteration is part and parcel of the old poetry which was the source of his dramas; the rugged, manly character of those northern gods and heroes called for such a rugged, virile, poetic mode of expression. In the amorous *Tristan* there was less call for such a method, while in the *Meistersinger* the demands of realism called for rhyme such as was used at the time. But here Wagner

shows us how to use operatic rhyme to advantage, as, for instance, in Sachs's

> "Nur mit der Melodei
> seid ihr ein wenig frei," etc.,

where the musical accent corresponds with the poetic rhyme, and the words are enunciated so clearly that even the purely literary rhyme retains its proper effect. *Parsifal*, finally, being based on Christian legends, retains the rhyme peculiar to Christian poetry. It is possible, also, that in his last two poems Wagner retained rhyme from a conviction that they might be found attractive even as purely literary dramas. As such they would, of course, be embellished by the use of rhyme; which, on the other hand, would not injure them as music-dramas; for operatic rhyme, even if superfluous, is not a blemish, although it may seem like painting the lily.

When Uhlig and other contemporary composers first got sight of the Nibelung poems they could not understand how any one could ever set such a thing to music. The irregular lines of various length — generally very short — puzzled them. They were accustomed to the dance-metres and rhythms of the old operatic librettos, and could not at first comprehend that this new method, while preserving the aspect of poetry, gave to the composer all the rhythmic freedom and variety of prose. Herein lies the most essential peculiarity of Wagner's poetry. But all these innovations disgusted the German critics. *Was der Esel nicht kennt das frisst er nicht.* The reception of the Nibelung poems affords a lamentable illustration of the critical incapacity of the German mind, which generally leaves to foreigners the task of

discovering its men of genius and their merits. Wagner relates that although some of the highest authorities had privately spoken to friends of his in the most complimentary terms of the Nibelung poems, they carefully refrained from helping him by expressing these opinions in public. The majority stood aghast at the idea that an "opera-composer" should have the effrontery to publish his librettos as "literary" productions. Hence, as he adds, "the cheap witticism of dramatic critics and musical jokers was the only notice I received." It was indeed most unfortunate that the musical "experts" who had not even wits enough to understand Wagner's music, should have been the "authorities," to whose opinions newspaper readers had to listen, on poetic productions which lay entirely beyond their horizon. So many of these opinions have been cited in preceding pages that only two more characteristic specimens need be added here. Ambros called the *Tristan* and *Nibelung* texts "deadly sins," and Speidel wrote that "he has no conception of poetry who finds Wagner's texts beautiful, or even tolerable." The true inwardness of all these criticisms may be revealed by two illustrations, one of which was previously referred to: Tappert's exposure of the two critics who belabored Wagner for his "artificial" and "clumsy" alliterations in *Parsifal*, in which, as a matter of fact, there is only one single alliterative line! The second point is more significant still. So much has been written about the unusual, antiquated, and self-invented words in Wagner's poems, that those who have never read them must labor under the impression that they are well-nigh unintelligible. But what are the facts?

"When I made a special study of Goethe's poems, some years ago, I noted in the first sixty pages of his poems 200 such expressions unknown before him. In Wagner's four *Nibelung* dramas we find, on the other hand, — presupposing Goethe as familiar, — only thirty instances, the same number in *Die Meistersinger*, and in *Tristan* only thirteen. At these minute statistics those may laugh who are annoyed by them." [1]

It need not be added that a musical dramatist has much more reason and excuse for employing unusual words than a purely literary poet. These antique words are revived for local color, or to replace words that have become worn like shillings in modern usage. In this freshness of diction, as in its dramatic structure and its elemental passion, Wagner's poetry ranks with the best we have.

MYTH AND MUSIC

"Never would I choose a subject which a clever literary poet might equally well use for a spoken drama. As musician I can select subjects, invent situations and contrasts, which must always remain outside of the literary poet's domain. . . . If it is the function of the modern dramatic poet to elucidate and spiritualize the material interests of our time from a moral point of view, it remains the task of the operatic poet and composer to charm into existence, with all its peculiar fragrance, the poetic spirit which is wafted to us from the myths and legends of antiquity; for here music offers the means for combinations which are not at the command of the poet alone, especially in face of our actors. This, too, is the proper way to elevate the opera to a higher level, which, on the contrary, we lower by asking the composer to set to music every-day occurrences and intrigues which the modern comic poet can handle much more successfully without music."

[1] Hans von Wolzogen, whose admirable pamphlet *Die Sprache in Wagner's Dichtungen* discusses Wagner's poems from every rhetorical point of view, with special attention to antique and obscure words and lines.

In these lines, written[1] to the Berlin poet Gaillard, in 1844 (shortly after *Tannhäuser* had been planned), Wagner put the case in favor of mythical subjects for the opera more compactly than in his theoretical writings. In these essays[2] he makes an elaborate effort to prove that the myth is the poet's ideal playground. The gods, he says, are the very first inventions of the human poetic faculty; they are connected with the phenomena of nature, with man's first and deepest impressions; hence the legends connected with them have at all times inspired the great poets to artistic creativeness. These myths are anonymous, like proverbs; they are no man's property, but are free for all poets to delve in and find the old gold for new jewelry. They are the condensed, concrete poetry and wisdom of the people. In them we get the simple human passions and emotions, free from accidental historic alloy, and therefore imposing no historic or local fetters on the musician's imagination: myths are as purely fanciful, as free from bonds of time and space, as the melodies and harmonies of the musician.

In his theoretical writings Wagner is too much of a German metaphysician to condescend to concrete illustrations; yet he might have greatly strengthened his argument had he pointed out some of the historic facts supporting it. He might have shown how, even in the literary drama, the greatest plays have purely imaginary instead of historic subjects. Æschylus and the other Greek dramatists found their material chiefly in the field of the old myths. Shakespeare's greatest plays are, with one or two exceptions, not his histories, but those that have a freely invented subject, and in several of the best

[1] *Bayreuther Festblätter*, 24 (a). [2] Especially IV. 41–53; VII. 143, 161.

of these the mythical, fanciful, or supernatural element enters — *Hamlet, Macbeth, Midsummer Night's Dream, Tempest;* what is more significant still, in the two greatest of the historic plays, *Julius Cæsar* and *Richard III.*, ghosts are introduced. In one of Schiller's letters to Goethe we find this significant confession: —

"Inclination and necessity impel me towards a freely imagined, not a historical, subject; one purely passionate and human; for of soldiers, heroes, and rulers, I have had already more than enough."

If this is true even of literary dramas, the case for the music-drama is infinitely stronger; for music has a natural affinity with the supernatural and purely fanciful. The thousands of operas written up to the time of Gluck, and including Gluck's, were almost all composed to librettos based on Greek myths. Of Mozart's two best operas, the *Magic Flute* belongs to the fanciful domain, while it remained for the speaking statue of the murdered commander, in *Don Juan*, to reveal the full grandeur of Mozart's musical genius. Gounod's one successful opera is *Faust*, which belongs to the same category. And when we look at Weber, we see again how deeply Wagner's genius and principles root in his operas. In his three best operas — *Freischütz, Euryanthe*, and *Oberon* the supernatural comes into play in a most thrilling manner. His son, Max Maria von Weber, says on this point: —

"He clearly realized what a great advantage the musician has over the poet in the representation of the supernatural. No possible combination of poetic words could even remotely produce the thrill of the trombone-tones in *Don Juan*, the ethereal effect of the violins in *Euryanthe*, the ghostly sound of deep flute-tones or the threatening of the bass notes of the clarinet. In the use of

these means of expression Weber was greatly aided by his gift of marvellously mixing the tone colors," etc.

Of this gift Wagner had received from the fairies a larger share even than Weber; hence, in part, his predilection for mythical scenes. The very first sound of his orchestra, when the *Lohengrin* prélude begins, transports us at once into the fairyland of myth and music, and it is in his works themselves that he has given us the strongest plea for his mythical theory. In his *Meistersinger*, on the other hand, he has revealed to us the proper, non-mythical field for a comic opera.

VOCAL STYLE

"What enchanted us in Bellini was the pure melody, the simple nobility and beauty of song. Surely it can be no sin to assert and believe this. Perhaps it is not even sinful to utter a prayer before we go to sleep that the German composers may learn some day to invent such melodies, and to treat the voice in this way."

"I shall never forget the impression made on me not long ago by a Bellini opera. I was tired of the eternally allegorizing orchestra, and delighted to come once more across a simple, noble song."

Does it not seem ludicrous that Richard Wagner should have written those sentences? How are we to account for such a phenomenon? Very easily: he was very young when he wrote them — only twenty-one. It was simply the whining of a cub for sweet milk. When the bear had grown up, he growled in very different tones, as we all know, and sweet milk was no longer his favorite food.

To speak more accurately, Wagner's musical instincts were all right; his first love was Weber, and his second Beethoven. But when he first came into contact with

practical life, he noticed that Weber and Beethoven produced much less *effect* with their songs than Bellini and Adam did. To an ambitious young man nothing seems desirable as effect, *i.e.* success; hence the temporary reaction which I have described in the first volume, in the pages headed "A Step Backward." It took him some years to recover entirely from this aberration. As late as 1843, he wrote in his *Autobiographic Sketch*, in speaking of his own opera, *The Fairies:* —

"The individual vocal numbers lacked the *independent free melody* with which alone *the singer can produce an effect*, whereas by his minutely elaborated declamation the composer deprives him of all opportunity to *make an effect* — a fault of most Germans who write operas."

When this *Sketch* was reprinted in book form, twenty-eight years later, this passage was cancelled, and for very good reasons. The words I have italicized show that at the time these lines were written Wagner had not yet quite emancipated himself from the current idea that the main object of an opera is to give prima donnas and tenors a chance to "make an effect" by singing "independent melodies." The mature Wagner of 1871 had long since repudiated this absurd notion, and taken a higher view of the music-drama and of the function of operatic singers. This view was that an opera should not be a "concert in costume," but a music-drama. It ought to be self-evident to all that when you unite music with a dramatic plot you should pay constant attention to that plot. This was not done in the Italian opera preceding the reforms of Gluck. There everything was arranged solely with a view to give the singers a chance to produce an "effect" with their "independent free

melody," their arias. Generally there were three men and three women in the cast, each of whom had to have a grand aria, and a share in a duo. There had to be a certain number of arias, in certain places, regardless of the plot; a nuisance which in some places mars the score of even Mozart's operas. This nonsensical custom Wagner trampled under foot mercilessly; he made the drama the main object in an opera in place of the singer. Before him there were no operatic poems, but only librettos; even so ardent a champion of old-fashioned opera as Mr. Sutherland Edwards is forced to admit that

"with the exception of Wagner's highly poetical and highly dramatic works, there are no operas written to be performed throughout in music which, by their words alone, would have the least chance of living."

It was Wagner's mission to reform the libretto and elevate it into a dramatic poem. Having done so, he saw that the next thing to do was to make it possible for the audience to follow that poem, word for word, and to be impressed by the dramatic plot. This necessitated a change in the function and method of the operatic singer; and it is from this point of view that we must judge all the peculiarities of his vocal style, which has been more persistently and ludicrously misrepresented than anything else in the "Art-work of the Future."

By taking away from the operatic singer his "free and independent arias," did he "put the pedestal on the stage, the statue in the orchestra"? Quite the reverse; he did, indeed, greatly enlarge the usefulness and eloquence of the orchestra, but at the same time he elevated

the vocalist from a singing puppet to an acting, thinking, feeling artist. We must learn to walk before we can dance; and just as no student should be given a lesson in singing before he has been taught to speak distinctly, — which few ever are, — so Wagner insisted that an operatic artist should be an actor before he presumes to sing. As an actor he can produce as great an "effect" as he ever can hope to with his "free and independent" arias; and if he is a good singer too, his power is doubled; wherefore it is absurd to talk of "putting the pedestal on the stage." Are Tannhäuser, Lohengrin, Siegfried, Hans Sachs, Walter, Brünnhilde, "pedestals"?

Even from a purely vocal point of view, the singer in Wagner's operas and music-dramas remains the "statue" on the stage. We can understand why Jules Janin should have written that in *Tristan* "the vocal part plays a rôle no more important than this or that orchestral instrument"; he probably heard a performance with inadequate singers. Those who have heard Niemann, Vogl, or Alvary in this rôle know how foolish such an assertion is; and if I had more space left I should like very much to quote that long and eloquent passage (VIII. 232, 233) in which Wagner, after calling special attention to the fact that although in no previous operatic work has there ever been so full and involved an orchestral score as in the third of *Tristan*, in particular, nevertheless Schnorr, by his wonderful art held the rapt attention of the whole audience in such a way that this orchestral symphony seemed in comparison to his song like the simplest accompaniment to an operatic solo, or rather disappeared as a separate factor, and seemed to be part and parcel of his song. Bear this in mind, and you

will understand his impatience with people who could find nothing but trombones and fiddles in his operas, and the meaning of his remark, in that instructive letter to Stage-manager Zigesar (*Correspondence with Liszt*, No. 42), that "if at the performance of my *Lohengrin* it was always *only* the music, nay, commonly *only* the orchestra, that attracted attention, you may feel assured *that the vocalists fell far below the level of their task.*" In all of Wagner's writings there is not a more luminous sentence than that one, or one that more deserves to be pondered. What else was the object of the Bayreuth Festival than a desire to have the vocal and dramatic side of the new art revealed in all the rôles by competent singers? What were all the novel arrangements in the theatre but an attempt to emphasize the subordination of the orchestra to the singer?

So much for the prominence of the Wagnerian singer, and his relation to the orchestra. But how about the style in which he is asked to sing — is not that unvocal? So we have been told a thousand times, yet the assertion is quite as ridiculous as it would be to say that Chopin's pianoforte style is unpianistic. On the contrary, it is the Italian style that is unvocal in character; or rather, one of the Italian styles, for there are at least two, the florid and the *cantabile*. Oddly enough, it is almost always the lovers of florid song who bring the charge of "unvocal" against Wagner and against such composers as Schumann, Franz, Liszt, Dvorák, Grieg; when, as a matter of fact, it is the florid style with its "scales, arpeggios, and trills" that is instrumental. The one great advantage which the voice has over instruments is the power of speaking and singing at the same time; that

is, of uniting the arts of poetry and music, thus doubling their power. This advantage the Italian florid style sacrifices utterly; in singing "scales, arpeggios, and trills" the words are lost as completely as if these passages were played on a flute or a violin. Moreover, any second fiddler or flutist can play at sight the florid arias of such an opera as Rossini's *Semiramide*, whereas to the human voice they are utterly antagonistic, as is proved by the fact that of all living singers that florid specialist, Madame Patti, alone can execute them correctly. That the lovers of this kind of practically wordless, instrumental "song" should call Wagner's music, in which every word is distinctly heard, "unvocal," is about as topsy-turvy and as funny as anything in a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta-plot. To cap the climax, this florid song is not even the true "old Italian" style of which the lovers of the vulgar cosmetic of "scales, arpeggios, and trills" talk so much. As that famous master of the old Italian school Caccini, remarked, the florid style was invented

> "to provide a certain tittilation of the ears *for the benefit of such as have little knowledge of what expressive singing means;* for, if they understood this, they would unquestionably detest those passages, since nothing is so offensive as they to expressive singing."

The modern Italian school, too, began, with Bellini and Verdi, to turn away entirely from this vulgar florid style, and to cultivate the more simple and artistic *cantabile*. Why, then, did not Wagner follow this tuneful vocal style in his operas? For the simple reason that he found one still better suited to his language and his subjects.

Verdi's vocal style is very well adapted to the nature of the Italian language; so is Gounod's, and Bizet's, to such French operas as *Faust* and *Carmen;* but for German poems, and such rugged and passionately dramatic subjects as Wagner chose, he needed a vocal style of his own. It is foolish to fancy that there is only one true vocal style. National and individual peculiarities should and do prevail here as in literature, and evolution comes into play too. Liszt calls attention to the changes in vocal style which have taken place during the last three centuries: —

"Stradella followed methods that differed from those of Carissimi; Farinelli no longer observed the rules which Durante had taught at the famous conservatory at Naples; and the great singers taught by Rossini widely departed from the mode of singing admired in the eighteenth century. The decisive introduction of the declamatory style will sooner or later be followed by the development of a new school; and as we behold the victory of that style in the works of Wagner, we take it for granted that the changes, too, which must necessarily follow in the artistic training of the singers, must especially proceed from, and be developed in, Germany. In creating for his fatherland a drama which is in harmony with its national character, Wagner imposed on it the duty of establishing a school of song based on his dramatic method."

Wagner's later vocal style differs from that of all other composers, and the most convincing proof of its being the one best suited for the German music-drama lies in the fact that it is the result of the lifetime experience and development of the greatest of dramatic composers. Three stages may be noted in its evolution. In *Rienzi* he still wrote vocal melodies for their own sake and for the singer's sake. In the *Dutchman, Tannhäuser,* and *Lohengrin* he makes great progress in the art of

merging the singer in the actor: the vocal part is no less melodious than before, but it is no longer intended as an "independent free melody" with which the singer can "make an effect," but becomes part and parcel of the total musical impression and dramatic emotion, so that we no longer think of the singers as tenors and sopranos, but as *dramatis personæ*. In the dramas of the third period this principle is carried out consistently, and at the same time the vocal parts are perfected by the *gradual elimination of all instrumental features*.

The history of music shows that the idiom peculiar to each instrument was not found till comparatively recent times. The piano had to wait for Chopin to reveal its true language. In the earliest Italian operas and oratorios the players did their own orchestrating, and for a long time instruments were used in an indiscriminate way until Bach and Haydn taught them to speak a language peculiar to their nature. Vocal music, too, emerged but slowly from chaos. The polyphonic style of the Netherlands was as unvocal as was the florid style of the Italian opera. Even the later simple and tuneful style of Italian and German opera retains much of the instrumental spirit. As Wagner truly says (IV. 360), in speaking of the Rossini-Weber period: —

> "A melody, in order to be really popular, had to be of such a nature that it could be fiddled and blown, and hammered on the piano, without losing any of its peculiar essence."

In other words, the vocal style is here not yet differentiated from the instrumental. Louis Ehlert never had a more luminous idea than when he wrote that Brahms's songs are

"not always planned for a human voice with pianoforte accompaniment, for frequently the latter might be replaced by an orchestra or quartet, and the former by a 'cello or oboe. This is sometimes true of Schumann, rarely of Schubert, never of Franz; and therefore, in this respect . . . I hold Franz to be the greatest of all."

There we have the whole matter in a nutshell. Franz has the most perfect style of all *Lieder* composers because his song is inseparable from the words, and loses its "essence" if "fiddled, and blown, and hammered on the piano." And what Franz has thus achieved in lyric song, Wagner has done for the music-drama. In his later works, the melodic and word accents coincide in every syllable; all dance rhythms are eliminated, and the result is that, in place of instrumental tunes underlaid with words, we have a true melodious declamation or poetic melody which seems to grow out of the words themselves — an emotional intensification of the melody naturally inherent in poetic language. No one would ever dream of playing the vocal parts of *Tristan* or *Parsifal* on an instrument; they would lose all their peculiar essence, because they are utterly and absolutely uninstrumental in character.

Years ago I used to wonder and ponder how this ludicrous charge that Wagner's vocal style is "instrumental" could have ever come into the muddled brains of academic critics and teachers of the "Italian method." The solution of the puzzle is now obvious to me. The source of all the tears lies in the difficult melodic intervals. The composers of "Italian melodies" had so spoiled the singers by writing for them only convenient intervals, that they and their friends cried out against a master who acted on the principle that dramatic expres-

sion is of more importance than the singer's convenience and "effective" tones. It was just so with the piano when Chopin first wrote his novel chords and passages: the "conservatory pianists" pronounced his style unsuited to the piano, whereas we now know that it is the very essence and idiom of pianism. To-day, if any pianist should bring such a charge against Chopin, he would be simply smiled at; and the time is not distant when the same fate will overtake any one who asserts that Wagner's vocal style is not suited to the voice. Singers who are at the same time *good musicians* do not find these intervals too difficult; and if they ever do, they should remember what Mozart said to that clarinet-player who complained of a difficult passage. "Is it possible to play it?" he asked, and when the player admitted it was, he replied, "Then it is for you to learn how."

It cannot be denied that to ordinary singers Wagner's vocal style presents unusual difficulties; but that is their own fault, or rather the fault of their teachers. Most vocal teachers still follow the Italian custom of neglecting difficult intervals, and sacrificing everything to beauty of tone and ease of execution. Now these are two elements which should, of course, be present in all song, and Wagner, in his project for a music-school in Munich, expressly insists (VIII. 174) that every vocal student should be taught to sing Italian songs in the Italian language. Indeed, no one ever had a better appreciation of the good qualities of Italian song and singers than Wagner, who often spoke admiringly of them, contrasting, for example, the distinct enunciation of Italians in recitative with the slovenly pronunciation of most Ger-

man singers of that time; and similarly he spoke well of the French. Had Bizet, or Gounod, or Verdi come to him for advice regarding the treatment of the voice, he would have told them to go ahead, — that their style was all right for their languages, and for such operas as they were writing, but for his own purposes he needed something different. What he strove for was an original vocal style, especially suited to the nature of the German language, and naturally adapted to the music-drama; and in this vocal style saccharine beauty of tone and ease of execution sometimes have to be sacrificed to higher dramatic and emotional considerations.[1]

For the music-drama, Wagner believed and said that the German language was better suited than the Italian. Seeming disadvantages in the German language turn out on closer examination to be actual advantages. Take the vowels, for instance. The German language has a greater variety of vowel sounds than the Italian. Some of these, like *ö* and *ü*, are difficult to sing, but when sufficiently practised they become easy, and they add new varieties of timbre to the singer's emotional resources. The Italian teachers pursue the opposite tendency of sacrificing even such variety of vowel sounds as they have, to mere sensuous beauty, which is best attained by approximating all vowels to *a* (*ah*). Thus, characterization, dramatic effect, variety of tonal and emotional coloring are all bartered away for sensuous beauty of tone. In the case of consonants, this is still more noticeable. The Italian language omits or weakens

[1] The differences between "Italian and German Vocal Styles" are discussed in my *Chopin and other Musical Essays* in much more detail than I have room for here.

all the vigorous letters. The Italians are too lazy to say Hamlet or Siegfried, but emasculate these words into *Amleto* and *Siffredo!* Siffredo for the heroic Siegfried! Fie! What maudlin effeminacy! With such an indolent vocal method, we can never have a true drama. It is from this point of view that the grandeur of Wagner's vocal style becomes apparent. *He* does not avoid any of the harsh consonants; he even crowds them together alliteratively when he wishes to give his song the color of an angry passion; or, conversely, he chooses soft and liquid ones for the expression of tender emotion. Thus he can give characteristic expression to all the dramatic emotions, and not only the tender feelings. His Alberich, Mime, Beckmesser, Klingsor, represent entirely new types of dramatic vocalism, serious and comic. To object to their occasionally harsh song because it is not "beautiful," is an exhibition of æsthetic puerility and greenness on a par with the action of the rustic who, on his first visit to a theatre, climbed on the stage, and gave the villain of the play a sound thrashing.

What an infinite variety of characterization there is in Wagner's vocal parts! In this respect his vocal style is as superior to the old operatic *bel canto*, or "beautiful song," as the Nibelung orchestra is to Donizetti's "big guitar." In most operas written before his, few auditors would know the difference if the tenors and sopranos exchanged their airs; for these are mostly instrumental tunes without any definite character. But fancy the Rhine-daughters or the Forest Bird exchanging their vocal parts with Erda or Brünnhilde, Mime with Siegfried, Wotan with Alberich, Elsa with Ortrud, Klingsor with Gurnemanz, Sachs with Beckmesser, and so on! The very thought raises a broad smile.

To sum up: we have now seen that the Wagnerian vocalist-actor dominates over the orchestra, which is merely his pedestal; we have seen that his vocal style is more truly vocal, more free from instrumental peculiarities than any other; and that its power of individual emotional characterization is unique and unprecedented. We may go a step farther still, and say that if any objection can be urged against this new style, it is that sometimes it is *too vocal*, in sacrificing the melodic flow to the speech and its accents. But in such cases, do we not gain in poetic interest what we lose in vocal melody? Is it not a sign of primitive musical taste to ask in an opera for nothing but naked *vocal* melody? Does not the continuous *orchestral* melody in these music-dramas atone for an occasional declamatory passage in them? In truth, however, such declamatory episodes are much less frequent than is commonly assumed. *Lohengrin* used to be considered full of them; even Franz spoke of the intervals in it that "go against the grain" (*widerhaarig*); to-day, even the Italian *bel canto* singers have mastered these passages, and in twenty years more they may succeed with *Siegfried* and *Parsifal* too.

Unfortunately, to this day real Wagner singers are rare, and the incompetent ones are responsible for the foolish notion that these vocal parts are unmelodious. These singers throw themselves with all their might and main on the most prominent, accented notes, expend all their breath on them, and drop out or underaccent the small, connecting notes and syllables in the text. The result is that the text is not made clear, while the music sounds like a succession of wild cries and exclamations, which come about as near Wagner's intentions as

a hand-organ could come to a proper performance of the *Tristan* prélude. The reader will remember that Wagner posted up a notice to the singers at Bayreuth in 1876: "Distinctness; the large notes come of themselves, the small notes and their text are the main thing"; and in his *Retrospect of the Parsifal Festival*,[1] he has some very instructive remarks on this point. Those who were so fortunate as to attend the first *Parsifal* Festival heard in Scaria[2] a singer who came nearer the Wagnerian ideal than any other perhaps ever did. He used the true dramatic *rubato*, looking on bars as a mere mechanical device, singing his words as an actor, yet in full consonance with the dependent orchestra. Every moment he proved the truth of his Master's assertion: "My declamation is at the same time song, and my song declamation." Every word, every syllable, was distinctly pronounced, there were no "shouts," no breaks, but a beautiful *legato* flow which made his song almost like a *cantabile*, but freed from every trace of instrumental and dance rhythms. This is the true art of

[1] X. 385–389. This essay, like many passages in his other writings, shows that he was one of the greatest teachers of singing the world has ever seen. The success of those who came under his personal instruction proves this still more eloquently. A few words of explanation would often enable them to overcome a seemingly unsurmountable difficulty. He paid much attention to proper breathing, but his usual method was to approach the matter from the mental side; to thoroughly understand a passage was, in his opinion, to master half its physical difficulty.

[2] Wagner's entirely impersonal way of dealing with art matters, and his willingness to concede an error of judgment, are illustrated by his treatment of Scaria. When Scaria first tried, at his request, the part of Hagen, he was displeased and would have nothing more to do with him. But when he heard him in Berlin as Wotan he was eager to be taken to him at once, to apologize for his mistake, and to make him the hero of the *Parsifal* festival.

dramatic vocalism, and a perfect representative of it is an infinitely greater artist than Madame Patti, the last representative of the florid style, who could not sing a Wagner rôle or a Franz song to save her life.[1]

With a few exceptions (among whom Julius Hey deserves mention) the vocal teachers have not yet learned anything from Wagner, although Wagner-singers are now more in demand than any others. The conservatories, too, will not be abreast of the situation till about twenty years from to-day. Consequently, the great dramatic singers will continue to be self-taught, as heretofore. It is interesting to note the gradual evolution of the Wagnerian singer. The first Lohengrin, Beck, declared that rôle impossible, and, in 1852, Wagner wrote that a Lohengrin singer was yet to be born. Even Niemann once asserted that this rôle could not be sung without cuts; he objected to the new Tannhäuser rôle in Paris, and at one time, as we have seen, he was even afraid to sing Rienzi after Tichatschek. But he persevered, and in the end became one of the greatest of Wagner tenors.[2]

[1] Future generations will read with amused interest that the academic and critical experts of Wagner's time, who looked on tunes as the only melodies, also considered tune singers as the only vocalists. As late as February 13, 1892, the *Neue Freie Presse* of Vienna wrote concerning a young Wagnerian tenor: "Whether Herr Dippel also understands the art of singing, he could not show as Siegfried; his second rôle, Raoul, in the *Huguenots*, will make that point clear." The ridiculous charge that Wagner's music ruins the voice is also still heard occasionally, but not so often as formerly, since Niemann, Vogl, Brandt, and Materna have shown how long a Wagner singer can preserve the voice. Pauline Lucca has justly remarked of this charge that it is "mere empty babble. Neither Wagner nor any other composer spoils the voice of any one who really knows how to sing."

[2] Niemann once remarked to me: "No one can sing well what he does not admire intensely. You speak of the profound impression the

Heinrich Vogl is another eminent tenor of this school who gradually grew up to his task. Hans von Bülow relates (*Skandinavische Reisebriefe*):—

"When, in the summer of 1869, I rehearsed *Tristan* and *Isolde* with those two incomparable artists, Herr and Frau Vogl, I could not avoid conceding a few insignificant cuts in the last act; at the resumption of the opera in 1872, I had the great satisfaction of hearing every note, without exception, sung by Vogl."

This same music-drama was, in 1862 and 1863, rehearsed in Vienna fifty-four times, and then pronounced impossible. Thirty years later it was sung in thirteen German cities. Thus do the singers and audiences grow. To-day, a majority of the great dramatic singers are Germans, or of the German school; and for this change in the vocal world, Richard Wagner is responsible.

LEADING MOTIVES.

In the evolution of Wagner's vocal style, the guiding principle was the desire to amalgamate the melody with the words, and to make the plot clear and the poem distinct at every moment. This was also the guiding principle in the development of the lyric *Lied* from Schubert to Franz and Liszt — a parallel which gives food for much thought. In his desire to make the singer's utterances intelligible, Wagner went so far as to call upon the

third act of *Tristan* made on you; but I can hardly believe that it stirs you as profoundly as it does me. Strong man as I am, I am not ashamed to confess that, on several occasions in this act, my singing has been marred by sobs and tears which I could not suppress. There is nothing grander in Shakespeare, in Æschylus than this act. But it is a tremendous task to sing it — an enormous burden on the memory. I have sung *Tristan* about forty times, yet this very morning Seidl and I studied the score together."

orchestra for assistance, by making it, also, speak a language with a definite meaning. This he could only do by using Leading Motives — those reminiscent melodies or chords associated with a particular person, incident, or dramatic emotion, which recur in the music whenever the person or dramatic idea with which they are associated recurs in the play or the singer's utterances.

These definite orchestral Motives not only help to elucidate the plot, they also, by their subtle suggestiveness and emotional definiteness and vividness, help to atone to the spectator for the loss of those delicate shades of facial expression which is inevitable in our large modern opera-houses; and, thirdly, the system of Leading Motives has enabled Wagner to be the first composer who could convert an opera from a crude mosaic of unconnected "numbers" into a music-drama, all parts of which are as organically connected by means of recurrent melodies as the parts of the drama itself are by the recurrence of the same characters, with the same thoughts, traits, and motives of action.

Here was an innovation in dramatic music which one would think the "authorities" must have surely received with acclamation as an epoch-marking stroke of genius. They did nothing of the sort. Here are a few of the "expert opinions" on Wagner's Leading Motives: —

"a method which is as clumsy as it is ridiculous" (Naumann). "A purely external aid to the memory . . . superfluous because the characters appear on the stage any way. . . . *Makes individual characterization impossible*" (Reissmann). "The crude materialism of external signs" (Jahn). "Too superficial and comfortable" (Lindau). "Such a naïve procedure that it cannot

claim a serious meaning but rather produces a comic effect" (Rubinstein). "The trick is not an exalted one, and Wagner works it without mercy" (J. Bennett). "A serious detriment to operatic music" (Hanslick). "Wagner's Leading Motive system was conceived by him, for him, is executable only by him, and will disappear with him" (Ehrlich).[1]

But the most heinous offence of the Leading Motive, according to the "experts," is that it is the outcome of "Reflection." There is something very astounding in the boundless contempt for "Reflection" felt by Wagner's critics. If he had taken the old unconnected operatic forms, and filled them out with new tunes, he would have been a great artist; but by creating a new art, by building his dramas after an original style of musical architecture, he showed that he was a charlatan, a victim of the detestable vice of "Reflection." What wretched bunglers were those "reflecting" men of genius — Lessing, Schiller, Goethe; Da Vinci, Hogarth, Reynolds; Gluck, Weber, Schumann! Beethoven, to be sure, never reflected. If he altered his ideas in his note-books over and over again — in one instance, eighteen times — that was not "Reflection," but pure inspiration. There is only one thing more to be said. If "Reflection" is such an easy and cheap thing, why did not these experts call an academic meeting long ago, put their heads together, and "reflect" until they had concocted a few Wagner operas? That would have brought them not only fame but money — piles of money. But perhaps they refrained because they did not wish to degrade themselves to the level of "reflecting" artists.

[1] H. Ehrlich actually wrote, in the *Gegenwart*, that there are no Leading Motives in the *Meistersinger*! And this man sat in judgment on Wagner for several decades, in two of the leading Berlin papers!

So wonderful a system of musical form as that based on the Leading Motives not only required a great deal of reflection — inspired reflection: for inspiration is simply a spontaneous and irresistible form of reflection — before it could attain its perfection, but it required the brains of several men of genius to originate it. Just as Darwinism was in the air long before the great naturalist appeared, so Wagnerism, in almost all its details, including the Leading Motive, had been foreshadowed long before Wagner, and it remained for him only to develop the suggestions furnished by his predecessors, and reduce them to a system. The French Grétry, who died in the year of Wagner's birth, and who suggested the desirability of an invisible orchestra, also makes use of a melody as Leading Motive nine times in his *Richard Cœur de Lion* and he discusses the point in his *Mémoires*. Gluck had one of those flashes of insight which revealed one aspect of the Leading Motive. One day his attention was called to the inconsistency between the words of Orestes, "Peace returns into my soul," and the agitated orchestral part; whereupon he quickly retorted, "He lies, he lies; he has killed his mother!" In Weber, the Leading Motive is already more than an *aperçu*. He employs it consciously, and with excellent result, especially in *Euryanthe*, where the tomb-motive recurs with thrilling effect four times. Professor Jähns, in his Weber biography — a splendid monument of German industry — shows what extensive use Weber made of Leading Motives. Already, in his *Abu Hassan*, such a motive is used in a reminiscent way. In the *Freischütz*, there are eleven motives recurring in thirty-four places, and they are of two kinds, one being associated with

persons, the other with situations. In *Euryanthe* Professor Jähns found eight Leading Motives, recurring thirty times. In *Oberon* there is only one, but of that one extensive use is made throughout the opera, to give the effect of Oriental local color and fairy-land.

Yet there is reason to think that Wagner did not get the suggestion of using Leading Motives from Grétry, Gluck, or even from Weber. Although the *Freischütz* was his operatic first-love, he did not take a hint from its recurrent melodies when he wrote his three early operas, — the *Novice of Palermo*, *The Fairies*, and *Rienzi*. It was not till he composed his *Flying Dutchman*, that he began to enter the path which was to lead to the real music-drama. Of this new departure he has himself given an interesting account (IV. 392–394).[1] Just as, in discarding the operatic arias, duets, and so on, he was not guided by reflection and a conscious determination to destroy old forms, but by the nature of his subject, so, he continues, it was not reflection that led him to adopt the system of ramified themes (Leading Motives), but the suggestions given to him by practical experience with his subject: —

"I remember that, even before I actually set to work on the composition of the *Flying Dutchman*, I had sketched Senta's ballad in the second act, and elaborated it poetically and musically; into this piece I placed unconsciously the thematic germ of the whole musical score: it was the concentrated image of the whole drama, as it stood before my mind's eye; and when I was ready to give the complete work a title, I was not a little tempted to call it a 'dramatic ballad.'"

[1] This autobiographic essay (*A Communication to My Friends*) is now accessible to English readers in Vol. I. of Mr. Ellis's translation of Wagner's works.

In composing the opera, he continues, this condensed thematic scheme in his mind spread itself spontaneously as a connected web over the whole opera; all he had to do was to let the various thematic germs contained in the ballad develop, each in its own direction, and the drama was completed. In adopting this new method, he followed an instinctive impulse inspired by the dramatic poem, and nothing but conscious reflection and arbitrary opposition to his artistic instincts could have induced him to resort to the old operatic forms, and invent new melodies for the same recurrent scenes. With this method, as Saint-Saëns has graphically remarked (*Century Magazine*, February, 1893), Wagner, "performed almost a miracle when he succeeded during the whole of the first act of the *Flying Dutchman*, in making us hear the sound of the sea without interrupting the dramatic action."

In *Tannhäuser*, the same method is followed, except that here there is no central ballad from which the musical motives emanated, but the recurrence of the themes is suggested by the various scenes and their organic growth and connection. Take, for instance, the Venus music. Would it not be inartistic, and almost absurd, when Venus reappears in the third act, to write new music for this scene? Does not the logic of dramatic music call for the same musical motives that we had heard before? No new music, however ravishing, could thrill us as does the recurrence of the strains we had heard before in the Venusberg. Nay more, the orchestra tells us what is going on in the mind of the despairing Tannhäuser before he invokes Venus to receive him again. The orchestra, in fact, with its Leading Motive, enables us to read his very thoughts.

Similarly, in *Lohengrin*, how utterly ridiculous it would be to have the Swan return to different harmonies from those which accompanied him on his first appearance! These harmonies are his *musical character*, which, like a dramatic character, may undergo various modifications, but not a complete change of identity such as a new melody would imply. Reflect on this sentence a moment, and you will see that for a genuine artistic music-drama the Leading Motive is a necessity, its absence a fatal blemish. The method pursued in *Lohengrin* marks a long step in advance of the *Dutchman*. In that opera the return of a theme often has the character of merely a simple reminiscence, such as other composers employed before Wagner. But in *Lohengrin*, Wagner's originality manifests itself in the way he uses the Leading Motives as musical characters, as *personified melodies*, and makes them undergo the same emotional changes as the *dramatis personæ* themselves.

The very gradual development of this method in his operas demonstrates the absolute falseness of the charge that the Leading Motive system was the result of "Reflection," and was arbitrarily applied in consequence of theoretical considerations. It was not till after *Lohengrin* that he wrote his theoretical essays; then, indeed, he did reflect on what his artistic instinct had gradually led him to; and in consequence of this reflection he commenced, with *Rheingold*, a style of musical architecture of which the Leading Motive is the framework, extending to all parts of the drama, and giving it symmetry and organic connection. Thanks to this method, there is in *Tristan* such a unity of spirit and form that every single bar betrays its source, just as

every piece of a broken mirror reflects the same image; and this unity between poem and music extends even beyond the drama; for when, in *Die Meistersinger*, Hans Sachs casually alludes to the story of Tristan and Isolde, does it not seem absolutely necessary that the pertinent Leading Motives should be quoted too? They are quoted as a matter of course. And with what polyphonic skill the Leading Motives in the later dramas are varied and constantly adapted to the poetic situation! Take Parsifal, for example. In the third act, when he appears with closed helmet, his motive, too, is masked in minor intervals and mysterious coloring; when he is anointed King, it sounds broad and majestic; in the second act, when he appears in the flower-garden, after having slain the knights, it has an agitated, heroic form; while at the close of the first act, where he is ignominiously thrust out of the hall by Gurnemanz, with the words, "Seek thyself, gander, a goose," it assumes a curiously grotesque form. With the same protean art all the other motives are transformed and differently colored.[1]

It is in the Tetralogy, however, that the new system

[1] Wagner had a marvellous instinct for the exact tone-color needed in each dramatic situation, and if existing instruments did not provide them he invented new ones; for instance, the *wooden* trumpet in the form of an oboe which was especially constructed according to his directions in order to enable the shepherd in the third act of *Tristan* to mark the emotional change from his sad melody to its jubilant transformation. In the Tetralogy he introduced several other new instruments — a bass trumpet, a bass tuba, and four tenor tubas, with which he produces superb chords of unique emotional coloring. Ordinarily, however, he needed no new means to produce new effects, for his original method of instrumentation produces an orchestral atmosphere differing entirely, in its tropical fragrance, from that of all other composers — including his imitators. It is unmistakable and unprecedented in its sensuous charm and emotional definiteness.

finds its most consistent and marvellous application; for here the Motives recur throughout not only one drama, but four dramas. The fact that the *Götterdämmerung* is largely built up of themes which had occurred over and over again in the three preceding dramas, while yet it seems as fresh and original as any one of them, calls attention to Wagner's unprecedented art of transforming and varying the same themes. It also calls attention to the depth, the originality, the musical and emotional concentration, and pregnancy of these Motives which lend themselves to such varied use and repetition. Has any one ever tired of these Motives? On the contrary, we are more and more moved and delighted as we pursue their course from *Rheingold* to *Götterdämmerung*. This is owing not only to their pregnancy, but to their remarkable realism. How characteristic are all these themes — the undulating Rhine-maiden melody, the clumsy musical stride of the giants, the majestic Walhalla theme, the heroic motive of Siegfried, the magic, veiled sounds of the Tarnhelmet, for example. And right here let me whisper a secret into your ear. If you will talk with a minor composer, he will shake his head sceptically over the Leading Motive system, and will deny that it has a future. And do you know why he shakes his head? Because the Leading Motive principle, although apparently easy enough to copy, is really very perilous. A shallow theme, used once, after the old operatic fashion, may pass without giving offence, and may even please; but used as a Leading Motive dozens of times, it would be simply nauseating. Now these minor composers are rarely able to create anything but shallow themes: hence a sound instinct leads them to

shake their heads and make a cross whenever the Leading Motive is mentioned.

In considering an operatic score, with or without Leading Motives, the main question is, after all: "Is it good music? Are the ideas original, appropriate to the situation, and are they developed in a musicianly way?" Wagner's musical ideas are not only original, and suited to the poetic emotion as no other music ever was, they are so plastic, so clear cut in their emotional definiteness, that they seem to have been performed in nature. Like proverbs and folksongs, these Motives will be handed down from generation to generation, things of beauty, and a joy forever. And as for the musicianly development of these ideas, Bülow hit the nail on the head when he wrote of *Tristan* that it has "a thematic elaboration as lucid as it is logical, such as no opera heretofore has shown."

Given, then, good musical ideas, artistically elaborated, it is clear that anything else we can get from them besides their own beauty is a pure gain, an addition to the intellectual resources and the emotional fascination of music. It is from this point of view that we realize the grandeur and importance of the Wagnerian Leading Motive which enables the orchestra not only to play good music, but music which suggests, music which talks, which tells us about the past, the present, and the future almost as definitely as spoken words. Take, for instance, the Flower-girl music in *Parsifal*. We hear it first when Gurnemanz, in his monologue, tells his companions about Klingsor's garden, and it arouses our curiosity regarding the damsels who are arrayed in such beautiful music. In the second act we see these girls, and are

bathed in the fragrance of this music in full blossom; and when subsequently a reminiscent strain is introduced it thrills us by its suggestive glimpse of the past as no mere words, and be they ever so poetic, could thrill us. Indeed, the poet's most imaginative figures of speech have not such suggestive power as these reminiscent Motives, which resemble them in function. The most striking use of reminiscent melodies occurs in the *Götterdämmerung* when Siegfried relates the story of his life to the hunters, just before his assassination. Almost all the exquisite Motives of the *Siegfried* drama here delight the hearer once more, and recall the pleasures of an earlier evening. To give Siegfried and the orchestra in this place a set of new melodies would have been as absurd, as inconsistent, as undramatic, as to make him tell a new story. Apply this principle to all the details of a score, and you have a luminous idea of the difference between an unorganic opera and an organic music-drama, in which the perfection of musical form is attained by having every part connected with every other, as closely as are the parts of the dramatic poem. So close, indeed, is this union of the poem and the music in Wagner's music-dramas, that in case of doubt as to the purport of the poem, the music will throw light on it; for the music is, as Wagner said, "ever initiated into the deepest secrets of the poetic intention"; and the orchestra sends its blood to pulsate in every vein of the poem — to paint the very blush in the heroine's cheek.

It has been said that the Leading Motives are puzzling, because it is difficult to remember their names. But as a matter of fact they have no names. Wagner never gave them any; it was the commentators who invented

them.[1] To those who are able to follow the German text, the Leading Motives never appear as riddles, for every line of the poem, as it is sung, tells the meaning of the music that goes with it, except in cases of subtle suggestion. It would be absurd to blame Wagner for the fact that some hearers do not understand German, or that some singers do not enunciate their words distinctly. If they are interpreted properly, there are no riddles in Wagner's music-dramas. They can indeed be enjoyed, in a *passive* sort of way, without paying any special attention to the Leading Motives, which, even in that case, make an impression by their musical beauty, emotional realism, and unconscious association of ideas; but he who would experience all the delights these art-works are capable of giving must bring his *active* attention to bear on the recurrence and ramification of the Leading Motives; then will he participate in the joys which Wagner must have felt when, in the white heat of inspiration, he gave them their subtle significance.

IN AMERICA

When Germans become *Europamüde,*— tired of Europe,— their first thought is of America. Wagner never saw America, but he was several times so tired of Europe that he was on the point of crossing the ocean. As early

[1] When Liszt described this new style of "musical architecture," the name *Leitmotiv* had not been invented. Hans von Wolzogen is credited with having first used it. It is not a very happy term, as it does not suggest the reminiscent and prophetic function of the Leading Motive, which is its very essence; but the term has now been in use so long that it is difficult to discard it. Besides, the suggested substitutes — typical themes, representative melodies, reminiscent themes, etc. — are not much better.

as July 5, 1848, he wrote a letter[1] to Music-Director Löbmann at Riga in which he said:—

"I, for my part, tell you frankly that if I were a poor performing musician I would not go to America now, for the simple reason that I should have been there long ago. What slavery is the lot of us poor musicians over here! I can see no grounds for dissuading any one from seeking his fortune there, where he is more likely to find it under any circumstances than here. If I cared to give instances, I could mention a case that lately became known here of a fagottist who went to America as a poor man, and in a very short time sent for his wife and children, as he had received a $1500 situation. A whole orchestra would certainly be still more lucky; for in a country where villages are constantly growing into cities in five years, there can be no lack of opportunities for the settlement of whole bands of musicians."

In September, 1849, he writes to his friend Heine that

"if it comes to the worst I shall write to my patron, your Wilhelm, in America, and tell him to get me some kind of post, as the last of the German Mohicans; then you shall pack us up with you, and we will all sail together. If I still hold on with all my roots to Europe, it is because I have work to do here, and with all my mind's weapons."

For five years nothing more is said in his letters about America; in January, 1854, it is Liszt's turn to be told that

"while I live here like a beggar, I hear from America that in Boston they are already giving 'Wagner nights.' Some one implores me to come; he says that interest in me is rapidly growing there; that I could make much money with concert performances, etc."

The excitement in London over his conductorship of

[1] Printed in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 1884, p. 263.

the Philharmonic Society in 1855 naturally had its echo in America. On Sept. 15, he wrote to Praeger: —

"From New York I have just received an invitation to go over and conduct there for six months; it would be well paid. It is fortunate, however, that the emolument is not, after all, so very large, or else perhaps I might myself be obliged to seriously consider the matter. But of course I cannot accept the invitation. I had enough in London."

About this time, too, Liszt wrote to him about efforts that were being made by Theodore Hagen and William Mason to get him (Wagner) to come to Boston to conduct a Beethoven festival. Wagner replied that he was glad that no big sums were offered; the chance to earn $10,000 in a short time would be a sore temptation, and he might be so foolish as to neglect his proper work once more, and go on such an expedition. So he begs Liszt to thank the gentlemen for their offer, and to say that he was unable to accept. But the offer had been a more serious matter than he fancied. Liszt wrote again to inquire if $10,000 to $12,000 for six months, with sufficient guaranty, would induce him to go to America. In response to which Wagner implores him not to tempt him any more. Ten years earlier he might have done such a thing; if he did it now, his *Nibelungen* would never be completed. Such sums, he adds, people should give him as a present. And so the matter was dropped; although, not long afterwards, he wrote to Fischer that if his *Nibelung* prospects did not soon improve, he would have his scores neatly bound, put them on a shelf, and go to America to earn a small fortune.

In May, 1857, came the offer from the Emperor of Brazil, which was referred to in its proper place in con-

nection with the *Tristan* projects; and in 1873, Chicago came to the front with a promise of plenty of money if he would come and superintend the production of his own operas. Chicago even aspired to be the place for the Nibelung Festival; but Wagner declined, chiefly because he was afraid he might not find there such an audience as he wanted.[1] At last, in 1875, an American offer came which he was able to accept, for it did not involve a trip across the ocean, but simply the composing of a march. When the musical programme of the impending celebration of the centenary of American independence was under consideration, Mr. Theodore Thomas selected American composers for the choral works, but suggested that for an instrumental piece it would be appropriate to invite the coöperation of the greatest living master of the nation which has done most to develop instrumental music. The suggestion was adopted, the Women's Centennial Organization pledging itself to raise the considerable sum which would be necessary for such a purpose. Mr. Thomas accordingly asked Mr. Federlein to make a proposal to Richard Wagner, whose answer, dated Dec. 22, 1875, follows in part: —

"On this occasion, too, I beg you to express my thanks to Music-director Thomas for his kind efforts in America in behalf of myself and my enterprises over here. As regards his latest request to me, I will say that it is quite possible that for the opening of the American national festival something may occur to me — perhaps in broad march-form — that I can make use of, although I have not written a note of music for a long time, and have quite got out of the way of so-called composing, which you will easily understand.

"Well, if I send you the thing, I shall expect in return that the Americans will behave well toward me, especially as regards

[1] Kürschner's *Wagner Jahrbuch*, 1886, p. 181.

the furtherance of my Festival Plays, which I have postponed with special reference to them to the second half of August, at the cost of considerable trouble in regard to the singers to be engaged. I hope soon to be able to feel assured of the American visitors."

On Feb. 8, 1876, Wagner wrote a letter to Mr. Thomas, of which the following translation is a part: —

"I take this opportunity to express to you my most cordial gratitude for your so successful American activity in behalf of German music, which has also benefited my undertaking. . . . I therefore declare myself willing to compose for the celebration of the Centennial of American Independence a piece for grand orchestra, of the length and character of my *Kaisermarsch*, to be sent at the latest on March 15 to a German bank to be named by you, against payment of five thousand dollars on receipt of the manuscript. For the sum here asked I make over to you the complete copyright of the composition in question for America, but not for Europe, for which I am tied by a contract with B. Schott's sons; but promise not to issue the German edition till six months after the American. . . .

"In fixing the amount of the sum asked, I am guided by my latest experiences, since, for example, my Berlin publisher has heretofore offered me three thousand thalers for a similar composition, which, besides, would not have been related to any national celebration. Mr. Verdi has received from his publisher about half a million francs for the unconditional rights to the publication and performance of his *Requiem;* consequently I may be allowed to make my inference regarding the value of the composition of a now famous writer. In regard to this matter I am obliged to give great attention to the proper utilization of such of my works as have not yet been squandered, since I have not so far been able to save a penny of my income from them."

The next letter is dated Berlin, March 18, and is addressed to Mr. Federlein: —

"Mr. Thomas's address not being at hand, I beg you to make the following communications to him. . . .

"I might have finished my score two weeks ago if my very absorbing occupation in Vienna and Berlin — to which I was pledged for this time — had not delayed me, so that I was finally able to complete it only by the greatest exertions. . . .

"I have indicated the correct tempo by a note regarding the triplet : on the other hand, the always vigorous accentuation of them must not have the effect of impeding the flow of the movement. On page 23 and 24 of the score I have indicated the great pauses, whose solemnity might be augmented at the first festival performance by firing a salute of guns and rifles at some distance. The remembrance of this solemn effect might perhaps be preserved at later repetitions, by an imitation with big drum-beats and so-called '*Ratschen*,' as employed by Beethoven in the Battle of Vittoria (in a side room — the sound coming apparently from a distance). . . .

"Now I wish you good luck! My friends here like the march very much. I believe it will reflect honor on me and on the Americans."

On March 25, he writes once more to Mr. Thomas: —

"I am delighted to have at last received a few lines from you personally. . . . I praise you highly for the great trouble you have taken to arrange this matter. May success now give you joy. . . . From the motto which I have placed over the title you will see that I took the matter seriously. A few tender passages in my composition I interpreted to my friends, by saying that here we must imagine the beautiful and accomplished women of America joining in the festival procession. I am accordingly much pleased to discover that I have thought of these women in advance, since they finally made such energetic efforts on behalf of my work."

The full title of the Centennial March is "Grand Festival March, for the Opening of the Centennial,

Commemorative of the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America. Composed and Dedicated to the Women's Centennial Committees by Richard Wagner."

The motto at the head of the score is

> "Nur der verdient sich Freiheit wie das Leben
> Der täglich sie erobern muss."
>
> ("He only earns the right to freedom and to life
> Who daily is compelled to conquer them.")

The manuscript consists of thirty-three large pages, and the score is for grand orchestra, including even a bass-trumpet, the procuring of which caused Mr. Thomas considerable trouble. It was first played in Philadelphia, on May 10, under Mr. Thomas's direction, with an orchestra of 150 men. It "was listened to with the closest attention, and a loud burst of applause came from the multitude when the march was over."[1]

Mr. Dannreuther relates that, after a performance of the Centennial March in London (1877), Wagner remarked: "Unless the subject absorbs me completely, I cannot produce twenty bars worth listening to"; and Lesimple says that when the telegram from America arrived telling of the great success of the march, he remarked with a smile, "Do you know what is the best thing about the march? . . . The money I got for it." It cannot be denied that this piece is the weakest thing Wagner had written in forty years. He had nothing to

[1] Mr. J. R. G. Hassard, in New York *Tribune*, May 11, 1876. In the same paper for April 17 Mr. Hassard has a long and able analysis of the march. Mr. Hassard was at that time the leading American critic, and his name will occupy a very prominent place if the history of Wagnerism in America is ever written in detail.

inspire him, to stimulate his imagination. It has been suggested that if he could have seen a collection of American tunes, he might have found something to elaborate in his own way; but the fact is that, as Mr. Seidl informs me, he did have a collection of American tunes, and found nothing to suit him. He was quite distressed for some time because no theme would occur to him; till one day, as he was emerging from a dark lane in Bayreuth into sunlight, that idea of the triplets occurred to him. It is not a valuable idea, and it took all of his orchestral skill and ingenuity to make something of it. What the Centennial March lacks is simply a pregnant stirring theme. In orchestration and harmonization, it is on a level with his best works. The richness of the orchestral colors, the massive sonority, pompous rhythmic movement, the art of producing dynamic contrasts and a grand climax, are truly Wagnerian, and on a level with the *Kaisermarsch* and *Huldigungsmarsch*.[1]

It was proper that Mr. Theodore Thomas should have conducted Wagner's only contribution to America, as it was he who chiefly prepared the soil for the rich harvest of Wagnerism which we are now reaping. Not that he was the first Wagnerian conductor in America. His predecessor as conductor of the Philharmonic Society of New York, Mr. Carl Bergmann, also did valiant work as a pioneer. "But, Mr. Bergmann," some one remonstrated with him one day as he was making up a programme, "the people don't like Wagner." "Den dey must hear

[1] The Centennial March is the only thing Wagner wrote for America; for the autobiographic essay, *The Work and Mission of my Life*, which appeared in the *North American Review*, was apparently written by H. von Wolzogen.

him till dey do," was his noble answer.[1] This same policy was pursued by Mr. Thomas for many years; rarely did he give a concert without at least one Wagner piece, regardless of what the people or the critics said. What success he had may be inferred from an interview in the *Vox Humana*, May 1, 1873, in which Mr. Thomas is reported as saying he "found Wagner's music increasingly popular every season. Could not make an acceptable programme without it. . . . Maintained a large orchestra expressly to interpret Wagner's music."

Within a year or two after the first *Lohengrin* performance at Weimar, Wagner numbers began to be conspicuous on American concert programmes. On the operatic stage, *Tannhäuser* had its first hearing in 1859, *Lohengrin* in 1870, while in 1877 a poor performance of *Die Walküre* was given by an incompetent company, and with Mr. Neuendorf as conductor. Mr. Thomas had intended to devote himself to the Wagner operas to crown his labors, and the deep instinctive insight into these compositions shown by him would have augured success; but in 1884 his plans were frustrated by the failure of the Italian opera at the new Metropolitan Opera House, and the establishment of German opera with Dr. Leopold Damrosch as leader. Mr. Damrosch, too, had done good missionary work in the concert-hall, and he crowned his labors by a series of seven performances of

[1] R. O. Mason's *Sketches and Impressions*, which contains many interesting facts about early musical life in New York. See also Mr. H. E. Krehbiel's *The Philharmonic Society of New York*, and especially his *Reviews of the New York Musical Seasons*, 1885–1890, for much valuable information regarding the history of Wagnerism in America. My own book, entitled *Chopin, and Other Musical Essays*, contains a much more detailed account of German Opera in New York than there is room for here. See also Ritter's *Music in America*.

the *Walküre* which were an immense improvement on those previously given. Nevertheless, *Die Walküre* has never been so popular in New York as *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*, and I regard this as evidence of the superior taste of New York audiences.

Dr. Damrosch sacrificed his life to German opera. A cold caught at a rehearsal developed into fatal pneumonia. After his death, Anton Seidl was asked to take his place. A wiser choice, or one more fortunate for America, could not have been made; for, with the possible exception of Hans Richter, no other conductor has ever entered so deeply into the dramatic spirit of Wagner's music. As Hans Richter, by his London concerts, revealed the inner secrets of Wagner's art to Londoners, so Anton Seidl took the very atmosphere of Bayreuth to New York. These two men were Wagner's principal pupils, and the similarity in their conception is not an accident, but establishes the real tradition as regards modification of tempo, and other matters, which ought to be fixed for all time by phonograph, before it is too late. Mr. Seidl studied with Mr. Richter, and it was through his teacher's recommendation that Wagner accepted him as his musical secretary in 1872. Four years later, Mr. Seidl assisted in rehearsing the Nibelung rôles with the solo singers and the chorus of men in *Die Götterdämmerung*. He also had charge of the musical side of the stage management, superintending, for example, the movements of the swimming Rhine-maidens in exact harmony with the score — a task requiring a thorough musician. In the following year he was sent to London to arrange the preliminary rehearsals for the Albert Hall concerts. The first Nibelung performances

in Leipzig owed their success very largely to Mr. Seidl's coöperation, and he, of course, was chosen to conduct the 133 performances of Neumann's travelling Nibelung Theatre. After the Berlin Nibelung Festival, Wagner alluded in a speech to "the young artist whom I have brought up, and who now accomplishes astounding things." The chief reason why Hülsen had refused the Tetralogy at the Royal Opera was that Wagner stubbornly insisted that Mr. Seidl should be conductor. It was his intention, too, that Mr. Seidl should conduct the first *Parsifal* Festival, but when King Ludwig offered his Munich orchestra, its conductor, of course, went with it, and Hermann Levi unquestionably proved an excellent interpreter.

That Anton Seidl should have been chosen as the conductor of the German opera in New York was, I repeat, extremely fortunate; besides his knowledge of the correct traditions, he showed an enthusiasm for his task which proved contagious to players, singers, and audiences.[1] Many famous Wagner singers were heard at the seven seasons of German opera, from 1884–1891 — Mesdames Materna, Lilli Lehmann, Schroeder-Hanfstängl, Kraus, Mielke, Ritter-Goetze, Brandt, Bettaque, Moran-Olden; Messrs. Niemann, Gudehus, Vogl, Schott, Alvary, Reichmann, Fischer, Staudigl, etc. Thanks to such singers and such a conductor, there were seasons when the Metropolitan Opera House, with its unlimited wealth, provided the best German opera in the world — best in everything but the scenic department, which was usually shabby and inadequate.

[1] Under his direction, *Die Meistersinger* had its first performance in America on Jan. 4, 1886; *Tristan*, on Dec. 1, 1886; *Siegfried*, Nov. 9, 1887: *Götterdämmerung*, Jan. 25, 1888; *Rheingold*, Jan. 4, 1889.

For "German Opera," we might as well read "Wagner Opera," for the result of the Metropolitan performances was a constantly growing preponderance of Wagner over all other composers. Mr. Krehbiel took the trouble to collate Director Stanton's official figures for the last five years of German opera, and found that "Wagner's dramas yielded $590,021.70 as against $410,332.75 brought in by the entire non-Wagnerian list, a difference in favor of Wagner of $179,688.95." Or, if we take the number of performances, we find that Wagner had 128, and all other composers combined — German, French, and Italian — 149! The New York public, in fact, seemed to want Wagner, the whole of Wagner, and nothing but Wagner; like the Bavarian who had three wishes, and for the first chose a thousand barrels of beer, for the second all the beer in the world, and for the third — after a long pause — another barrel of beer.

The stockholders of the Metropolitan, most of whom had more wealth than musical culture, became disgusted at this state of affairs, and concluded to abolish German opera altogether, as the only way of getting rid of Wagner. Driven from the opera-house, this music once more took refuge in the concert-hall, and to-day, not only does Wagner have more performances at American concerts than any other composer, but a programme entirely devoted to him draws a larger audience than any possible combination of other composers. In London, where Mr. Rowbotham wrote an article, in 1888, on "The Wagner Bubble Burst," the six intended performances of German opera in 1892 had to be increased to twenty — almost all Wagner; and there, too, the Wagner concerts are patronized the best. In Paris, *Lohengrin* had

sixty-one performances in its first year. As for German countries, the Austrian Archphilistine wrote, a decade ago, that the Wagner movement had evidently reached its climax, if not got beyond it. At that date Wagner had about five hundred performances a year; to-day the number is doubled; and it is safe to predict that it will double again within the next ten years, if the supply of dramatic singers and conductors equals the demand. The Bayreuth Festivals, too, have constantly grown in popularity, more than a hundred performances having been given there since the Nibelung Festival of 1876. *Parsifal* was given in 1882, 1883, 1884, 1886, 1888, 1889, 1891, 1892; *Tristan*, in 1886, 1888, 1889, 1891, 1892; *Die Meistersinger*, in 1889, 1891. Wagner's widow has zealously striven to carry out his intentions; but even if these Festivals should cease before the end of the century, they will have done their work. Wagner's dramas are now the heritage of the whole world, and although the Music of the Future has become the music of the present, it will continue to be the Music of the Future.

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